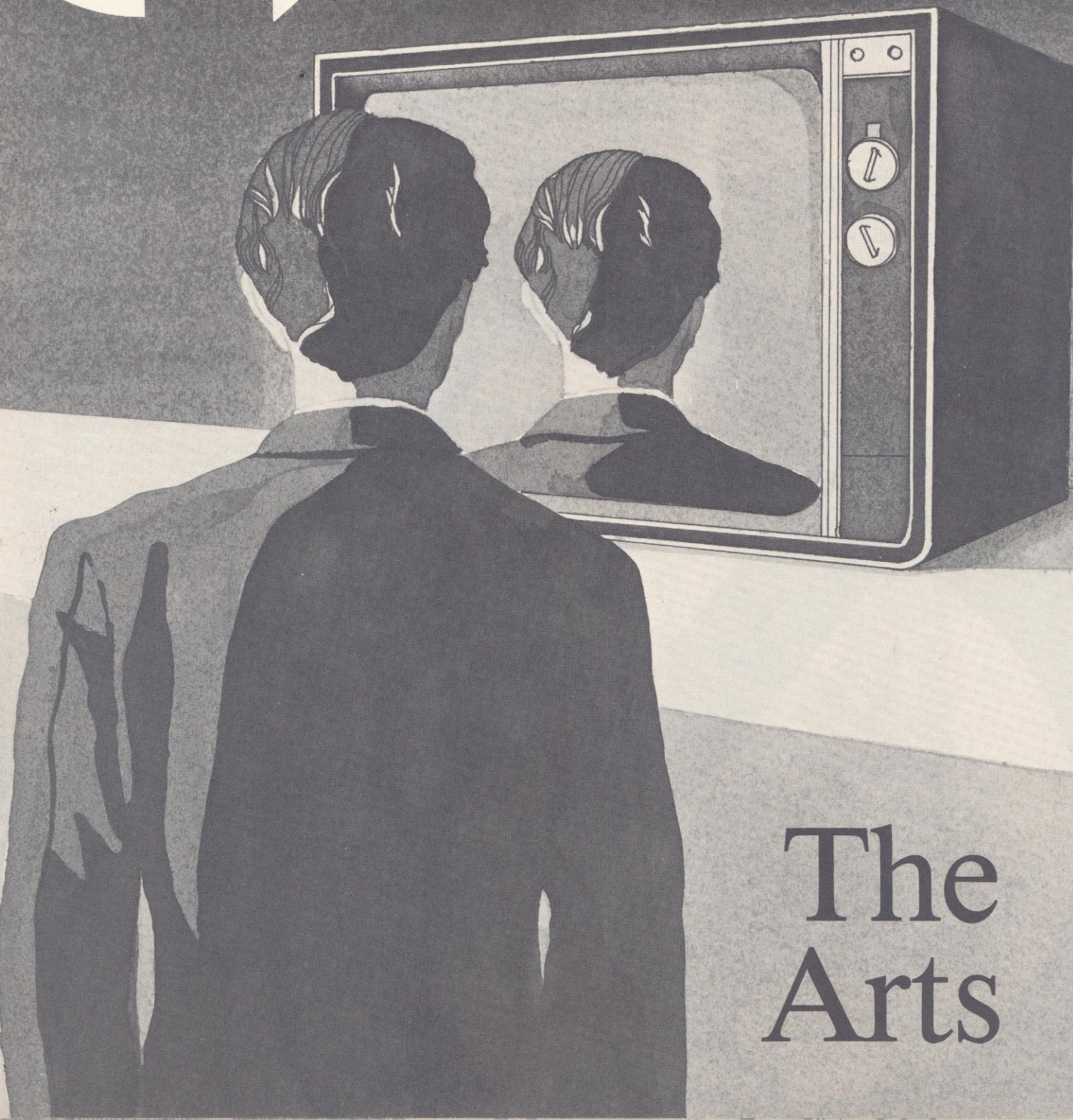


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Community Television Review

April 1981
\$3.00



The Arts

Calendar

April 8-12, 5th Annual Atlanta Independent Film and Video Festival, sponsored by IMAGE (Independent Media Artists of Georgia, Inc.). Internationally known video artists Kit Fitzgerald and John Sanborn featured.

April 9-11, 4th International Conference on Culture & Communication, sponsored by the Annenberg Fund and Temple University's Departments of Radio-TV-Film and Anthropology. Temple University's Center City Campus, Philadelphia.

April 22-25, 1981 Ohio University Film Conference, "Film History: Industry, Style and Ideology," Athens, Ohio.

April 23, Children's Television Conference, sponsored by Alpha Epsilon Rho, National Honorary Broadcasting Society. Moore Hall, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

April 24-May 16, 7th Annual Video & TV Documentary Festival Screenings, sponsored by Global Village, 454 Broome St., New York, NY 10013 (212) 966-7526,

April 25-26, Midwest Regional Meeting, NFLCP, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL. Contact: Margie Nicholson, 5007 Monona Drive, Monona, WI 53716 (608) 222-7317.

April 25-26, Northwest Regional Conference, NFLCP, Portland State University, Portland. Contact: Adam Haas, 3132 SE 28th Ave., Portland, OR 97202.

April 29-30, Copyright Seminar, NAEB sponsored, "Contracts & Copyright: Legal Perspectives on Managing Television Production," Norfolk, VA.

May 2, Mountain States Regional Conference, NFLCP, Albuquerque.

Contact: Bill Makely, Quote . . . Unquote, Inc., 115 Veranda Rd. NW, Albuquerque, NM 87107.

May 4-6, 5th National Indian Media Conference, co-sponsored by the Native American Public Broadcasting Consortium and the American Indian Film Institute. Sheraton-Spokane, Spokane, WA.

May 5-10, 30th Annual Convention, American Women in Radio & Television, Sheraton-Washington. Contact: AWRT, 1321 Connecticut Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20036 (202) 296-0009.

May 27-29, Annual Meeting, National Association of Public TV Stations, Mayflower Hotel, Washington, D.C.

May 28-June 1, 30th Annual Convention, National Cable TV Association, Los Angeles, Convention Center. NCTA Convention Office, (202) 457-6700.

June 3-7, National Video Festival and Student Competition, American Film Institute, Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C. 40 hours of exhibitions, 5 symposia on video topics. Contact: Phyllis Myers or James Hindman, Video Services, AFI, Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C. 20566 (202) 828-4013.

June 26-July 2, 100th Annual Conference, American Library Association, Civic Auditorium and Hilton Hotel, San Francisco.

July 9-12, 4th Annual National Convention, NFLCP, Atlanta Biltmore. Contact: Convention

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**Community
Television
Review**
Volume 4 No. 2

Planning Committee, c/o NFLCP SE Region, 988 Westmoore Dr. NW, Atlanta, GA 30314.

If you know of upcoming conferences, meetings, festivals, screenings or other special events, please tell us about them. Send all information to CTR Calendar, c/o University Community Video, 425 Ontario SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414.



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Uplink/Downlink by George C. Stoney. **Page 32**

Atlanta's 1980 Conference on Cable TV and the Arts began a fascinating dialog. Anna Marie Piersimoni looks at the event and major issues. **Page 11**

Canadian artist Tom Sherman surveys 10 years of TV by artists north of the border and offers some thoughts on the development of this electronic commodity. **Page 13**

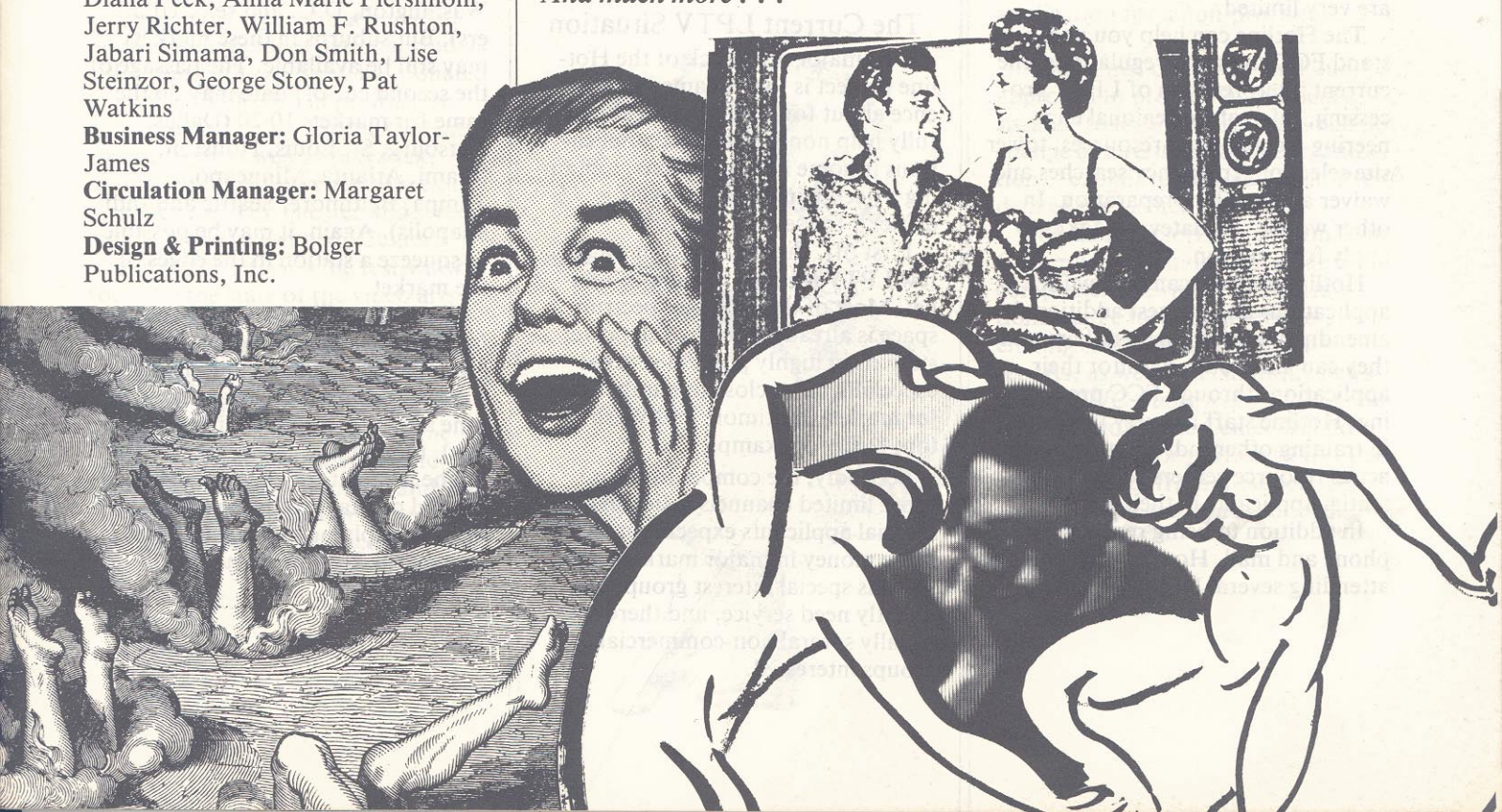
Many of the country's arts groups are now looking south to New Orleans. Journalist D. Eric Bookhardt tells how the Cultural Cable Coalition there won an impressive victory in the recent franchise award. **Page 18**

The impact of cable and videodiscs on the arts is no small matter, according to Melisande Charles. Artists, arts groups and arts funders need to take some initiative. **Page 20**

Many video access centers have years of experience working with local arts groups and bringing their work to TV audiences. Access Profile by Tom Borrup looks at the Twin Cities' University Community Video. **Page 22**

Using a string of access channels in New York, writer Bill Rushton sees a public arts network taking form. He hopes his idea catches on. **Page 27**

And much more . . .



NFLCP Hot Line Gives Help to Low Power TV Applicants

by Pat Watkins

In January, the NFLCP received funds from the John and Mary Markle and Rockefeller Foundations to aid non-profit organizations develop FCC applications for low power TV (LPTV) stations. LPTV is a new form of television service the FCC is considering licensing. In exchange for a very limited broadcast range, legal, financial and technical requirements will be greatly eased.

The NFLCP Hotline was started to provide the Washington-based aid which non-profit organizations need to submit competent applications. While LPTV can be an excellent opportunity to create community TV and complement many cable activities, an enormous number of commercial entrepreneurs are filing applications by the hundreds. Non-commercial applicants, who often lack resources to act on a new project quickly are in danger of being excluded from LPTV, especially in major markets where available channels are very limited.

The Hotline can help you understand FCC rules and regulations, the current interpretation of LPTV processing, referrals to regional engineering aid and local resources, tower site selection, frequency searches and waiver and exhibit preparation. In other words — whatever it takes to apply for a station.

Hotline staffers can review filed applications and suggest additional amendments to strengthen them and they can aid groups monitor their applications through FCC processing. Hotline staff are very interested in training other individuals who can act as resource centers for other potential applicants in their area.

In addition to being reached by phone and mail, Hotline staff will be attending several NFLCP regional

conferences (the national also) to hold application development workshops. Tentative dates are: Chicago — April 24-26, New York — May 1-3, and Atlanta — July 9-12. Contact the Hotline office for more details.

The Hotline is not funded to help non-profit organizations apply for commercial stations, aid non-commercial applicants prepare for comparative hearings, or aid in the development of on-air station programming and financial systems: all activities which are needed but beyond the Hotline's current capabilities.

Pat Watkins
National Federation of
Local Cable Programmers
Low Power Television Hotline
1314 14th St. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005
(202) 797-3660.

The Current LPTV Situation

One major drawback of the Hotline project is that it came into existence about four months too late to fully help non-commercial applications in some major markets. Obtaining a license in major markets is difficult for several reasons.

First off, there's room for only a few LPTV stations in a major market. Most of the possible spectrum space is already filled by full power stations in highly populated areas — especially those close to another major market (Baltimore and Washington, D.C. for example).

Secondly, the competition for those limited channels is fierce! Commercial applicants expect to make more money in major markets, numerous special interest groups frequently need service, and there are usually several non-commercial groups interested.

The third reason is that many competitors for those limited channels filed LPTV applications quite early, some as early as September, 1980. After a complete application is filed at the FCC it's placed on a cut-off list. This list essentially establishes a date (approximately 60 days) after which it's very difficult to slow or stop the processing and granting of the application (by competing applications, petitions to deny, etc.).

While an application's passing its cut-off date in a major market does not close that market to additional applications, it does further limit the channel choices.

The first cut-off date (approximately 225 applications) was February 17th. The second (around 80 applications) will be March 31st.

In rough, practical terms, we estimate the passage of the first cut-off date probably made it close to impossible for new applications to result in stations in the top eight markets (NYC, LA, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, Boston, San Francisco, Washington, D.C. and selected others). But suburbs in these markets may still be available. The passage of the second cut-off date may do the same for markets 10-20 (Dallas, Pittsburg, St. Louis, Houston, Miami, Atlanta, Minneapolis, Tampa, Baltimore, Seattle and Indianapolis). Again, it may be possible to squeeze a station in the edges of the market.

If you are still interested in applying for stations in those markets and are capable of committing the substantial resources necessary (intense time and one to four thousand dollars), the Hotline can help!

The next cut-off date should be at the end of May, so if you are interested in applying in markets 25-50, contact the Hotline immediately.

Community Television Symposium held by the American Film Institute

20 leaders in community television from around the country met in Washington, D.C. in March to look at the history, current status, and future of community television. In addition to a critical examination of community TV issues, the participants lent their expertise to the development of a showcase program of community television, one of the exhibitions planned for the National Video Festival the institute will present at the Kennedy Center this June.

The symposium, sponsored by AFI's television and video services program, was coordinated by Phyllis Joffe, board member of the NFLCP and Associate Editor of *CTR*.

Commenting on the symposium, AFI's Director Jean Firstenberg noted the institute's commitment to help explore all forms of video programming. "We're at a stage," said Firstenberg, "where some concerted effort is necessary if video programming is to keep pace with recent advances in video technology. The perception of alternative television as 'the road less traveled' has given way to its literal definition: a medium where many choices are available. The challenge now," she said, "is to increase both the capabilities, and the public's expectations, of all these choices."

American Film Institute and Sony Announce National Video Festival

A National Video Festival and Student Competition will be held at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. June 3-7.

Presented by the American Film Institute and sponsored by Sony Corporation of America, the festival will include a series of symposia on emerging issues in the video field, exhibitions of representative video programming, and a national student video competition. Sony has donated more than \$100,000 in production equipment as prizes for the student competition as well as playback, monitor, and video projection equipment for the AFI Theater and screening room in the Kennedy Center.

Exhibitions during the festival will focus on the state of the video arts and will include screenings of independent, gallery, and community programming material.

The five symposia to be held during the festival will respond to the state of the art, past history, and future possibilities of video, and will feature nationally known experts in the field including producers, critics,

financiers, administrators, educators, historians, government representatives and technicians.

For additional information contact: Sue Donoghue/Patty Prendergast, AFI, John Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C. 20566 (202) 828-4040.



Bond Chosen NFLCP Board Secretary

Atlanta City Councilman James Bond has been elected Secretary of the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers Board. Bond, who is in his second year on the Board, was elected at the Feb. 25 Washington Board meeting to fill the unexpired term of the secretary who recently resigned. This position puts Bond on the Executive Committee, which consists of the President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary.

Cable Television Information Center Announces Changes

CTIC Associates, Inc. began operations on February 1st. The new private consulting corporation is taking over the consulting work previously done by the non-profit Cable Television Information Center (CTIC). CTIC Associates, Inc. will provide technical assistance and consulting to local governments while the CTIC will continue to fulfill its educational mission as a non-profit corporation.

The incorporation came as a result of an unfavorable ruling by the Internal Revenue Service on the Center's application for a non-profit tax status.

"Our aims, our goals, and our approach to providing technical assistance to local governments will not change as a result of this reorganization," explained Harold Horn, President of the Center.

The Cable Television Information Center will continue to provide a comprehensive range of informational and educational services, including seminars and research reports, as well as its monthly newsletter, *CTIC Cable Reports*. Remaining non-profit, the Center will now receive the major portion of its operating revenues from these services, memberships and contributions.

Regional Reports

Southeast

Atlanta Prepares for '81 Convention; Region Plans Miami Conference

"Coming of Age" is the theme of the 1981 Annual NFLCP Convention to be held in Atlanta, July 9-12, 1981. Atlanta, which is the base of our Southeast Region, was chosen as the conference site because of the rapid growth of the cable industry in the city. "Coming of Age" also accurately describes the growth of community interest and involvement by Atlanta residents in cable and other new communications technology.

Access Atlanta, a local community television advocacy organization, recently received the first portion of a \$24,000 grant from Cable Atlanta, Inc., to stabilize its operations and hire a full-time coordinator to direct its many activities. Kathy Herman was selected for this position and is already hard at work.

The board of directors for Blacks for Access is now in place with Sherekaa Osorio as Chairperson and Adrienne Thompson as Director of the

organization. "Black/Arts/Atlanta" is the title of a series of public access programs the organization is producing. The series will document and establish a video library of the work of local artists. The organization is also planning a "Cable Television Fair" to introduce and provide information to the community on the various components of the cable industry.

After a year of negotiation, Cable Atlanta, Inc. and the City of Atlanta have reached final agreement on the rules for public access operation. These rules were reviewed in a public hearing March 16, 1981 and could be signed by the Mayor as early as two weeks after the hearing. Cable Atlanta, Inc. has already exceeded its first year commitment to public access, a commitment which represents the greatest ever made to access in the history of cable television. Included in its commitment are provisions for five neighborhood access centers, each with fully equipped color studios and editing facilities; a fully equipped mobile production van for use throughout the city; free work-

shops in television production for Atlanta residents and community organizations; a public access radio station; and two channels on the cable system designated for public use. Two of Cable Atlanta's access centers are in place, the Central and Southwest neighborhood facilities, with the next center, in Northwest Atlanta, scheduled to open in the fall of this year.

Franchising is now underway in Miami, the proposed site of the next Southeast Regional Conference. NFLCP member T. Willard Fair, President of the Urban League of Greater Miami, Inc. has expressed interest in hosting the conference in late May. For further information, contact Jabari Simama, NFLCP Southeast Region, 988 Westmoor Drive N.W., Atlanta, GA 30314, (404) 874-7100.

Until then, "aluta continua," the struggle continues in the Southeast Region. See you at the National Convention, July 9-12.

— Jabari Simama

Southwest

Houston and Ft. Worth to Host Two Spring NFLCP Conferences

NFLCP's Southwest Region hosts two conferences this spring, the first in Houston March 28, and the second in Ft. Worth, May 22-23. Rapid growth of NFLCP members in the region through last year's conferences, in Dallas and later in New Orleans, has spurred plans for even more activity during the current year.

The theme of the Houston one-day event was "Cable TV: New Horizons for Arts and Humanities Programming," and its leadership accented those already gathered in Houston

for the Houston Arts Festival, a co-sponsor of this cable event.

Speakers were Brian Owens of ACTV in Austin, Robert O'Conner, Texas Committee for Humanities, Ann Holmes, Fine Arts Editor of the Houston Chronicle, Michael Woolcock, Executive Director of the Houston Symphony Society, and Sue Buske, National Director of the NFLCP.

Final preparations are being made on a second spring regional conference, which is scheduled for Fort Worth May 22-23. Ft. Worth is one of the last major cities in the Southwest Region that has yet to grant a franchise.

The city of Ft. Worth and the North Central Texas Council of Governments will serve as co-sponsors with the region's NFLCP in the May conference, to be held on the Texas Christian University campus. It will address both access users and all those municipalities in the metroplex area in answering the question, "Now that the franchise is granted, where do we go? — Getting started with Cable." More information will be available soon, as final plans are made. Contact: Rev. Ed Deane, SW Regional Coordinator, c/o Highland Park UMC, 3300 Mockingbird Lane, Dallas, TX 75202, (214) 521-3111.

— Ed Deane

Mountain States

Colorado Groups Form Net; Albuquerque Expands Programming

Grass-Roots Network (Aspen) and Valley Vision TV (Basalt, CO) have formed the Western Colorado Telecommunications Consortium (WCTC) for the purpose of bringing public access to the western part of that state. On December 1, 1980, the balance of State CETA awarded WCTC a \$30,000 planning grant and has committed \$110,000 to match NTIA funds and \$100,000 for first-year operating funds.

The pending NTIA grant will be used to purchase a mobile production van, mobile post-production van, VHS portapak and ancillary equipment. Potential consortium members are Colorado Mountain College with 18 community education centers around the state; the cities of Crested Butte, Telluride, and Grand Junction, Colorado; and John Denver's Windstar Foundation.

Quote . . . Unquote, Inc. of Albuquerque moved into a new, larger warehouse building at 115 Veranda Rd. N.W., Albuquerque, NM 87107. Construction of the interior walls was done by 25 of QUQ's media associates. Programming of the Community Cable Channel (CCC) will begin April 6, 1981 from 6pm to 10pm seven nights per week. Daytime hours may be used for a satellite feed such as ACSN.

Barbara Glodt, Dissemination Coordinator for QUQ, is scheduling programming materials on the channel to stimulate involvement of the community in public access by showing what is being done elsewhere. If you have individual or series tapes you would like us to show, please contact Barbara or Bill Makely at (505) 345-4900.

The next NFLCP regional conference will be held May 2 in Albuquerque. We are still trying to locate access people in Utah and Wyoming. If you know of any, please pass their names and addresses along.

— Bill Makely

Central States

Bloomington, Dayton Host Conferences; Michigan Senate Gets Into Act

"Cable Television as a Community Resource" was the theme of the Fall Regional NFLCP Conference in Bloomington, IN. Don Smith and his staff at the Monroe County Regional Library were hosts to about sixty people, nearly half of whom signed on as new members. Featured speakers and workshop facilitators included Susan Bednarczyk from New York, Denise Vallon from New Orleans, and Adolph "Dutch" Koenig of the NTIA in Washington.

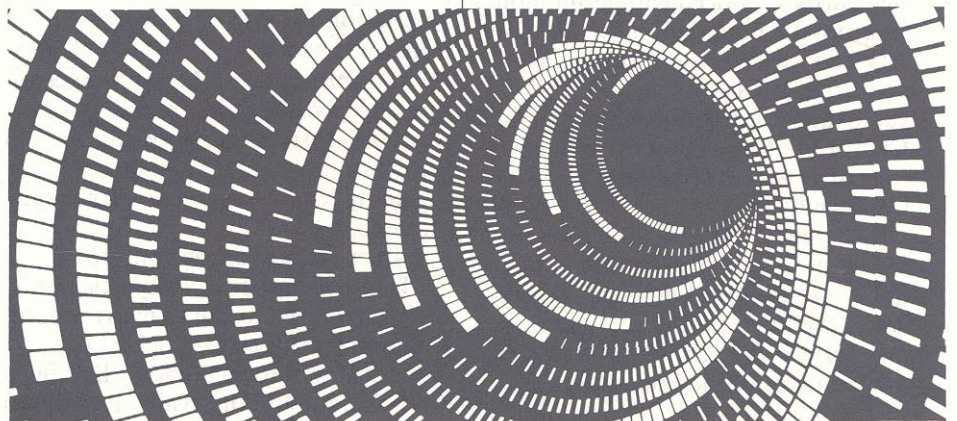
Bloomington is famous for its outstanding children's program, "Kids Alive!", and the Community Access

Channel 3 staff gave an entertaining workshop on how they work with the kids in their service area. "Access Primer A to Z" was not a workshop, but a live cable program starring various conference participants.

The Michigan State Senate has formed a Special Committee on Cable Television and Governmental Activity/Informational Telecasting, under chairman Kerry Kammer. One of their first activities was publication of a booklet entitled, "Citizens' Guide to Cable Television Franchising," an easily understood primer prepared by Suzanne Skubick.

Our next regional conference is scheduled for early spring in Dayton, Ohio; to be hosted by Roxie Cole and her crew at Access Dayton.

— Dave Bloch



Northwest

Portland Conference Set; Franchise Wrinkles Ironed Out

The biggest news from the region is the upcoming regional NFLCP conference in Portland, Oregon on April 25 and 26. It will take place at Portland State University in cooperation with the Center for the Moving Image. George Stoney will be participating in the conference which will focus on developing community programming in the Northwest.

The conference couldn't come at a better time. Both Portland and Seattle are in the final stages of franchising, with significant access provisions in both cities' agreements.

While we're on the subject of franchising, Portland's process is an ever changing affair. Liberty Cable, operator on the West Side of Portland and opponent of a franchise award to Cablesystems Pacific, made a surprise turn around in January. At the first public hearing on the franchise ordinance, Liberty and Cablesystems made a joint announcement that they will share resources and cooperate in the wiring of the East Side. The result? A sure franchise award to Cablesystems Pacific effective sometime this summer and no worry of a voter referendum previously feared.

For more info about the regional conference, contact Adam Haas, 3132 SE 28th Ave., Portland, Oregon 97202.

— Adam Haas

Far West

California League of Cities Gives Support to Access Efforts

Working with the City of Pacifica, the NFLCP California Chapter was successful in getting a resolution passed by the League of California Cities: 1) to support public access, 2) to undertake a comprehensive study of cable, and 3) to provide consultants to cities.

Due to meager personal resources we did not have a regional conference this winter. Instead of having a conference, we had a coffee/conversation room at the Western Cable Show where members gathered, played tapes, demonstrated equipment and shared information. It was very successful. One of the tapes shown was one partly produced with grant monies from the Foundation for Community Service Television which was created as a result of the AB 699 cable rate deregulation legislation in California. It is a composite videotape of 11 access centers in California.

The Executive Committee met on December 13, 1980 after attending the Western Cable Show and a meeting of the Foundation for Community Service Television to review the performance of the Foundation and to plan for our future participation in it.

The California Chapter newsletter is now being handled by Open Channel, Capitola/Santa Cruz, California and edited by Peter Brown formerly with St. Johnsbury TV Coop in Vermont!

"Community Video in California" produced by Marin Community Video (MCV) is available for distribution: 61 Tamal Vista, Corte Madera, 94925, (415) 924-7370. Cost of rental is \$30.00 — purchase \$125.00 (3/4"). Other formats are available upon request.

— Constance H. Carlson

Mid-Atlantic

D.C. Site of Low Power TV Session

The exciting potential and promise of the FCC's proposed new low-power television licenses was the message of a three-day workshop held Dec. 17, 18, 19, 1980. The workshop was sponsored by NFLCP in association with the Appalachian Community Satellite Network at ACSN offices in Washington, D.C.

Low-power television is an economical way of bringing the benefits of public access and local origination programming to non-cable subscribers. The new low-power regulations make it possible to bring a community television station to the smallest communities. The signal can be transmitted over 10-20 miles either to all homes, or scrambled so that subscription fees can be charged to finance services.

The objective of the conference was to provide participants with as much information as possible to help them complete their applications, including help in conducting frequency searches.

In exchange for the conference, which was cost-free, the participants were expected to call as many organizational members of the NFLCP as possible to inform them of the new regulations and the availability of the low-power stations, assess interest levels of the respondents and offer technical assistance in the event that the respondents desired more information. Some 100 or more organizations were called.

The conference was coordinated by NFLCP members Jean Rice, Jim Bell, Diana Peck and Jerry Richter. Anyone interested in more information about low-power television may write for a copy of *The Low-Power TV Handbook: A Primer on the Low Power Service* from the Office of Telecommunications, Corporation for Public Broadcasting, 1111 16th Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

— Carol Novalis

Midwest

Madison Survives Budget Challenge; Spring Conference Set for Chicago

The existence of community access to cable TV will continue for those in Madison, Wisconsin. Funding negotiations have developed positively for the Madison Access Center and Municipal Video Services with \$140,000 proposed for a five year period. The City Cable Regulatory Board approved the budget to be negotiated for matched funding from the Complete Channel TV Co.

The progressive use of cable services has increased in Minnesota. During 1980, 100 franchise negotiation proposals and 85 franchise renewals have passed through the Minnesota State Regulatory Commission.

In Iowa City, Iowa, citizens are now experiencing the availability of four (government, library, educational, public) access channels to use through their cable service (Hawkeye Cable Vision of ATC). Students, artists, community service organizations and special interest groups are learning the use of video portapak, studio and editing production facilities through workshops conducted in the Iowa City Public Library and Hawkeye Cable Vision Studios. Videotapes, cablecasted, have involved community documentaries, performances, parody variety shows and serials.

Due to the activity in cable in Chicago and surrounding communities, a Midwest Regional Meeting is being planned for April 25 and 26 to promote ways in which access can be established and used for community interests. For further information, contact Claudia Crask, 4936 A.N. Winthrop's, Chicago, Illinois 60640 312-275-3352.

Please send Bill Newbern, 602½ S. Dubuque St., Iowa City, Iowa 52240 (PH: 319-337-6819) any information you wish to share about your community's involvement with franchise negotiations, conferences, workshops with Access use of cable, access programming, special interest group uses of Access.

— Bill Newbern

Atlanta, Georgia invites you to:

ACCESS: Coming of Age

The Fourth Annual National Convention of the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers (NFLCP)

July 9-12, 1981 at the Atlanta Biltmore Hotel

July 8, 1981: Pre-convention training seminar for access and program directors

We are at a crucial stage in the development of access to communications media. While franchising continues heatedly across the country, the platform is being built for the community voice of the future. Rapid advancement in cable and computer technologies have continued to make this means of public expression an issue of vital concern to the NFLCP.

Drawing on the experience and history of access models throughout the nation, **ACCESS: COMING OF AGE** will provide a comprehensive overview of past, present, and potential/future access communications. The 4-day convention will feature over 50 workshops addressing community, industry, institutional, and government concerns including franchising, renegotiation, Federal and local legislation, programming for special audiences, new technologies and services, censorship and privacy issues, evaluating access centers, and much more.

The one-day pre-convention seminar will be an advanced training session for access and program directors focusing on the planning utilization and

maintenance of public access and local origination operations.

- Close-up On Access Models: Case Histories
- Access Equipment: Too Much Or Too Little?
- Strategies For Success In Community Outreach
- Networking and Producers' Rights
- Is the Hardware Ready For The Services We Want?
- Citizen Involvement In The Franchising Process: Before, During, and After
- The 1980 Franchises: Can They Be Enforced?
- Telecommunications Policy And The Consumer
- Cable Commissions: Advisors Or Regulators
- Ethics And Municipal Access: How To Avoid Political Abuse
- Plugging National Organizations And Resources Into Local Programs
- Kids And Cable
- Local Programming And Women's Futures
- Ultimate Access: Strategies For The Future

REGISTER TODAY!

NFLCP Convention Planning Committee

c/o Cindy Kuper
Convention Coordinator
P.O. Box 7013
Atlanta, Georgia 30357

Sponsored by:

National Federation of Local Cable Programmers
National Endowment for the Arts

Convention Planning Committee:

- Access Atlanta, Inc.
- Atlanta Public Library
- Cable Atlanta, Inc.
- City of Atlanta
- Cox Cable Communications
- I.M.A.G.E. Film and Video

FEES:	
NFLCP Members	\$70.00
Non-members	\$85.00
Registration plus NFLCP Membership	\$85.00
NAME _____	
ADDRESS _____	
CITY _____	
STATE/ZIP _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> MEMBER	<input type="checkbox"/> NON-MEMBER

'81 Minneapolis Arts and Cable Conference to Explore Impact, Potentials and New Realities

by Sallie E. Fischer

Art/Culture/Television. Somehow, this mix hasn't really caught on in a big way. For whatever reasons, the potential for exciting, innovative, informative and diversified arts and cultural television programming has not been fully explored. The Arts/Cable Exchange, a national conference planned in Minneapolis, November 8-10, will explore this potential for Cable TV.

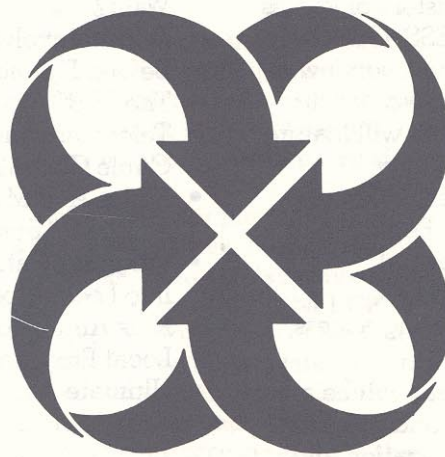
The folks who brought us Edith Bunker and The Fonz are now forming arts and cultural satellite channels. PBS is looking at the impact of cable and wondering where its future lies. Urban cable franchising wars are bringing forth promises of channels, funding, equipment and other resources for arts groups and artists. Independent videomakers wonder if the anticipated demand for programming to fill all the new channels might result in their being able to earn a decent living.

Major arts institutions sense a bigger, more national, audience because of the wonders of coaxial cable and "birds" in the sky. Community artists are beginning to wonder how all this video madness will affect their ability to attract live audiences for their work. And in the midst of it all, the Reagan administration is advocating a cut of 50% in the budget of the National Endowment for the Arts.

These are the broad issues confronting those who create art, who document it, who distribute it, who fund it, and who appreciate it. And they are the kind of issues which will be addressed at the Arts/Cable Exchange.

Sponsored by University Community Video, the Minnesota Cable Communications Board, the Minnesota State Arts Board, the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, the Minneapolis Arts Commission and the St. Paul-Ramsey Arts and Sciences Council, the Exchange intends to pick up where Atlanta's 1981 Cable TV and the Arts Conference ended.

It is taking place in association with the National Alliance of Media Arts Centers and the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers



and is designed for artists and arts-producing organizations, independent producers, cable television operators and programmers, public and private funders, media centers and others who are concerned about the use and impact of television on the arts.

Although a complete listing of workshops and sessions has not been finalized the following are among the sessions the conference plans to offer:

- Administering Arts Channels: Whose Responsibility?
- CABLE: A Tool for Audience Development for the Performing Arts
- Media Arts Centers, Access Centers and the Arts
- Getting In On The Ground Floor: Cable Franchising and the Arts Community

- Private Funding of Arts Programming for Cable TV
- CABLE: Friend or Foe to Public Television?
- The Impact of Videodiscs and Other New Technology
- What Will Cable Mean to Arts Education?
- Video Art on Cable
- What Is Cable TV and How Does It Work: An Introduction
- Satellite Arts and Cultural Programming

In addition to the workshops, an "arts event" is being planned for the conference and an exhibition of video work from throughout the country will take place.

Pat Brenna of Minneapolis has been named as Conference Coordinator. She is working with a Conference Steering Committee whose members are derived from co-sponsoring groups.

Conference planners expect the event will draw participants and panelists from throughout the U.S. and Canada. Brenna, who feels that the Twin Cities' unique cultural resources and cable franchising activity make the area an ideal location for the Exchange, says response to the conference thus far has been enthusiastic.

In order to make the Exchange accessible to a wide variety of groups, the conference registration fee will be on a sliding scale. Lunch on both days will be included with the fee.

The conference will take place in the downtown Minneapolis Holiday Inn, which is easily reached by public transportation and close to many of the City's cultural and social attractions.

For additional information about registration, accommodations, travel and conference activities, contact Pat Brenna at UCV, 425 SE Ontario, Minneapolis, MN 55414. Telephone: (612) 376-3333.

1980 Atlanta Cable TV and the Arts Conference Embraces Tough New Issues

by Anna Marie Piersimoni

"What kind of things would you like to see on SoHo Cable Television?" asked an interviewer for Cable SoHo of a "man-on-the-street" in New York City.

"Truth & Beauty," came the reply.

The 200 participants at the Atlanta "Cable TV and the Arts" conference were asking the next appropriate question: How can cable television, with all its promise, bring a reality of sharing our individual truths (and beauty)?

To begin a dialogue on issues which almost always led to this question, artists, arts administrators, independent film/videomakers, educators, cable programmers, civic officials, and cable operators, among others, from all parts of the country gathered for this conference on August 16-17, 1980, organized by Access Atlanta.

Conference sessions covered funding of artists and cultural programs/productions, distribution, exhibition, programming and marketing. Case histories of successful projects were provided, and technical demonstrations in public access workshops, slowscan video, and computer-video interaction were held. The recurring problem of the artists' role and what political action should be taken within that role was evident throughout the weekend and culminated during the last panel session, "The Role of the Artist."

Opening remarks by Shirley Franklin of the Atlanta Department of Cultural Affairs and Robert Wright, President of Cox Cable Communications, set the tone for what proved to be a double-edged sword of optimism and caution. While Wright conceded the industry's poor record of artists/producers, he painted a future picture of cable companies and artists working together to "turn this opportunity into an unparalleled cultural asset for America."

He continued, "Any cable company which thinks it's going to survive the '80s without incorporating the support of and providing assistance to video artists just hasn't opened its eyes."

During the conference, he and others found that there are indeed ways and plans for doing so. Shirley Franklin concurred with his optimism, citing the potential of cable television as a way to "re-integrate art into everyday life." Yet she warned of the importance of taking control; that this re-integration could not take place without a transfer of decision-making from the few to the many.

This sentiment was made explicit by Jay April, National Advocacy Chairperson for the NFLCP. April urged that the conference participants look to Washington to see where the hearts of the cable companies really are, advising, "Don't think for a minute that the cable industry is really that interested in fully local communications on cable."

He reminded everyone that most of the programming now available is satellite-fed, centralized services and that recent de-regulations allow even more over-the-air signals, satellite "pay" services and computer data services.

"Fifty-four channels are going to fill up in a hurry," he predicted, "And what do you think will get bumped if the cable companies feel it isn't profitable? The access channel. If real art is ever going to appear on television — some of the more experimental art, art of a given community; if points of view of a group or individuals within the community are ever to be expressed; if there's ever to be diversity of viewpoint within this nation, it's only going to be on access channels."

April gives public access about two years (given the current de-regulatory mood of Congress and the rush to fill channel space) for confirmation

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through legislation. "They want to give us access by contract, by gentleman's agreement," he said. "That legislation must be passed to guarantee access is mandated by Congress and not left up to the whims of cable companies with varying levels of public service commitment."

A number of approaches to filling cable channels were presented or proposed for the arts. Merrill Brockway, Executive Producer for Arts Programming at CBS Cable, announced the beginning of their new arts payable service that is designed to "carry programs not readily available" yet roughly described as existing "somewhere between PBS Programs and CBS programming."

Despite the in-house production and creative control that might be assumed from the PBS/CBS comparison, Brockway claimed that the service would provide opportunities for the artist/producer as well as the artist/performer. "We like to think of ourselves as a magnet to the creative community — and we open our arms to independents," he said.

In contrast to CBS' grand plans for programming from the outside in, Denise Vallon of the New Orleans Cultural Cable Coalition told of her group's efforts to bring the local arts back home. Generating support from businesses, cable companies, funding agencies, etc., the coalition was formed as an umbrella group of arts organizations working to promote and provide local arts on cable, an "arts channel" for New Orleans that would highlight the talent and artistic achievements in the city.

Vallon cited studies showing that local art audiences grow, not shrink, when works are also available on TV. She felt that good local work shouldn't have to leave town to become famous and that a wider local audience could be encouraged through cable — and with satellites, a national audience.

A group working successfully with local arts programming now (with hopes to make just such a leap to national distribution via satellite) is the Artist Television Network in New York, formerly known as SoHo Cable. In an area with the greatest

concentration of media artists in the country, Jaime Davidovitch, spokesperson for the group, acknowledged that an audience is already there. A recent survey of the cable subscribers revealed that SoHo Television (their weekly program) is one of the top-rated shows, with an estimated audience of 5,000-10,000 viewers per week.

An invitation from Warner-Amex Corporation to make use of its QUBE system in Columbus, Ohio, provided the Artist Television Network an opportunity to gauge its impact on an even broader level. The response was remarkably favorable, confirming the artists' belief that there is, indeed, an audience for art on television if it can be "packaged" to give people unfamiliar with it more information, without compromising the art.

Their "package" consisted of a sampling of a variety of arts programming (experimental, documentaries on art, interviews with artists, music, theatrical, etc.) and included a live call-in show to discuss the works and issues surrounding them.

Davidovitch maintained that continuity is also important in developing a sizable audience and for marketing. At its present level of operation, at least 25% of the Artist Television Network's budget goes directly to artist fees, reflecting a commitment that artists be paid every time a work is shown.

Compensation, marketing and audience development proved to be the central themes of the final panel session, which addressed "The Role of the Artist." George Hemphill, assistant director of the Middelton Lane Gallery in Washington, D.C., felt that the concept of "art over the cable" had been adequately covered at the conference and stressed that artists be more sensitive to audiences taking a responsibility to recognize and "carry the precious characteristic that an artwork has."

In contrast, Randall Lyon, an artist from Televista Projects in Memphis, Tennessee, urged artists to forego the "precious" quality for the broader purpose of developing an infant medium through experimentation within the field, "to create an environment conducive to information art."

Reviewing those two extreme positions George Stoney, the panel's moderator, suggested it should not be assumed that society does not already have fixed patterns of television watching, "We have so much to do to overcome passivity in front of the set."

Ben Davis, an Atlanta artist offered a possible solution, "All arts programming should be live." He felt that the artist is seeking a primary experience and, since television provides only a secondary experience, cable's most remarkable promises were live programming and two-way communication, which invites audience involvement.

Jaime Davidovitch, also on the last panel, stated the nature of the arts must be questioned itself, and particularly within the field of television. Consideration must be given to a "new kind of artist," who incorporates communication of information and aesthetic expression in a variety of formats, he said.

Certainly, what became clear at the conference was a problem facing artists of many different mediums — that of closing the gap between the contemporary artist and the contemporary audience. Yet, how this television medium will affect that problem is difficult to deal with, when actual use of the medium is still negotiable. For this reason, the success of the conference lay primarily in the amount of information it was able to bring to artists and in politicizing them to the broader issues affecting individual and community use of the medium.

"We have to become politicians as well as artists," said George Stoney, "Unless we speak up for our interests, the artist will be grist for the mill, the marketing executives."

Anna-Marie Piersimoni, an artist, is Director of Image Film and Video Center in Atlanta.

Television By Artists in Canada: Ten Years of Cable Experience

by Tom Sherman

In the mid-60s, contemporary art activity was customarily 'covered' by the major Canadian networks as the basic 'kook item.' Television journalists doing arts programming on these major networks consistently handled artists and their work with tongs. I believe this production-based censorship is generally thought of as a way of protecting the public from different ways of seeing and thinking about the world. This production-based censorship was, and continues to be, virtual law in network television. Network programmers perpetually do everything in their power to distance their audience from the prime source of information on art — the art itself.

In the early 70s, cable systems were wired in the major cities of Canada. Artists were working in small isolated pockets of small-format, closed-circuit video art communities. Portable video technology was still in its infancy, making most artist-produced video unbroadcastable, due to horrendous recording quality. Before the technological developments of 1971-72, there really wasn't any television by artists in Canada.

Mary Dunn was working in community cable programming in the early 70s in Toronto. Dunn's community programming began to include video by artists in 1972. Around this same time, thousands of miles West, Clive Robertson ran a short series of programs called *Live Lice* in Calgary, Alberta. And further West, in the same year, Byron Black was doing a regular art program in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Dunn, Robertson and Black worked with cable studio facilities, all doing the best they could within

the inherent limitations of the public access channels (too little studio time and money). These pioneering individuals were instrumental in advancing the concept that artists were too part of the community; and therefore, they had the right to be represented in the electronic media environment of their community.

In the mid-70s, Ian Murray, Cyne Cobb, and Brian MacNevin programmed a new cable system in Hali-



fax-Darmouth, Nova Scotia. Back in Toronto, related activity picked up again as artists Miriam and Lawrence Adams, Terry McGlade, General Idea, and I worked at making art fit the television context. All of us had to put up with various levels of indifference levied by cable station and network television management.

Concurrent with early television activity by artists, many individuals and groups were fast learning how to use small-format, non-broadcast video for the direct conveyance of their image and thought. With the financial aid of the Canada Council, artists' use of closed-circuit video became very sophisticated in Canada in the 70s.

By the end of the 70s, virtually all cities in Canada had artist-produced television on cable. Of particular note was the success of the *GINA SHOW* in Vancouver through the

efforts of John Anderson and Elizabeth "Digit" Vander Zaag. The *GINA SHOW* is a fast cut half-hour of Super-8 and small-format video programming delivered weekly to the Vancouver audience.

I did a show like this on the Ontario Educational Communications Authority's provincial educational network, TV Ontario. My program was called *Afterimage*. I featured film and video by artists. Unfortunately, *Afterimage* suffered from strict censorship by the technical administration of the network. TV Ontario has a great signal, but everything they broadcast is either film transfer or 2 inch studio video.

In 1978, Scott Didlake did some very interesting literary programming with a character generator in Toronto. His show was called *Read Television*. Months later, Clive Robertson moved to Toronto from Calgary and produced an impressive *Teleperformance Festival*. Artists did live performances for taping and subsequent cablecasting via Metro Cable TV, which has since been absorbed by the rapid expansion of Canadian Cablecasting Ltd.

The list could go on and on (of artists working with television in Canada that is), but I'll stop here, surely having forgotten and omitted many. After all, I couldn't afford cable when I lived in Montreal, and I've never been to Winnipeg.

"Television By Artists"

With the 70s behind us, let us turn our attention to the 80s. *Television by Artists* is by far the most successful artist-produced television series I have ever seen in Canada or abroad. I offer this praise on the basis of two factors: 1) this series is inventive enough to be good tough art for an art audience, and 2) this television art



From "Darn These Hands!" by Robin Collyer and Shirley Wiitasalo, 1980, part of the *Television by Artists* series. Photo by Robin Collyer.

series manages to be good television for a wider, general audience.

In other words, this series is accessible information for more than just an art audience. I believe these artists have produced a truly interesting collection of video art works because they went out of their way to reach a wider audience. This series will entertain all viewers who enjoy seeing the television medium used in fundamentally different and unusual ways.

Television by Artists was broadcast over Rogers Cable TV, a subsidiary of Canadian Cablecasting Limited. The cable system permitted the video information to find its proper context for viewing. The 6 programs were made by Ian Murray, Robin Collyer and Shirley Wiitasalo, Dara Birnbaum and Dan Graham, Randy and Beren Ricci, myself, and John Watt. Each program was put on the local cable system twice each week, on Tuesday and Friday evenings at 8:30 p.m. The entire series ran from late May to early July of 1980.

As a production model, I think there is a great potential for other communities. A Space, an art organi-

zation, initially funded the production and paid the first broadcast fees. The cable system delivered the community art to their subscribers.

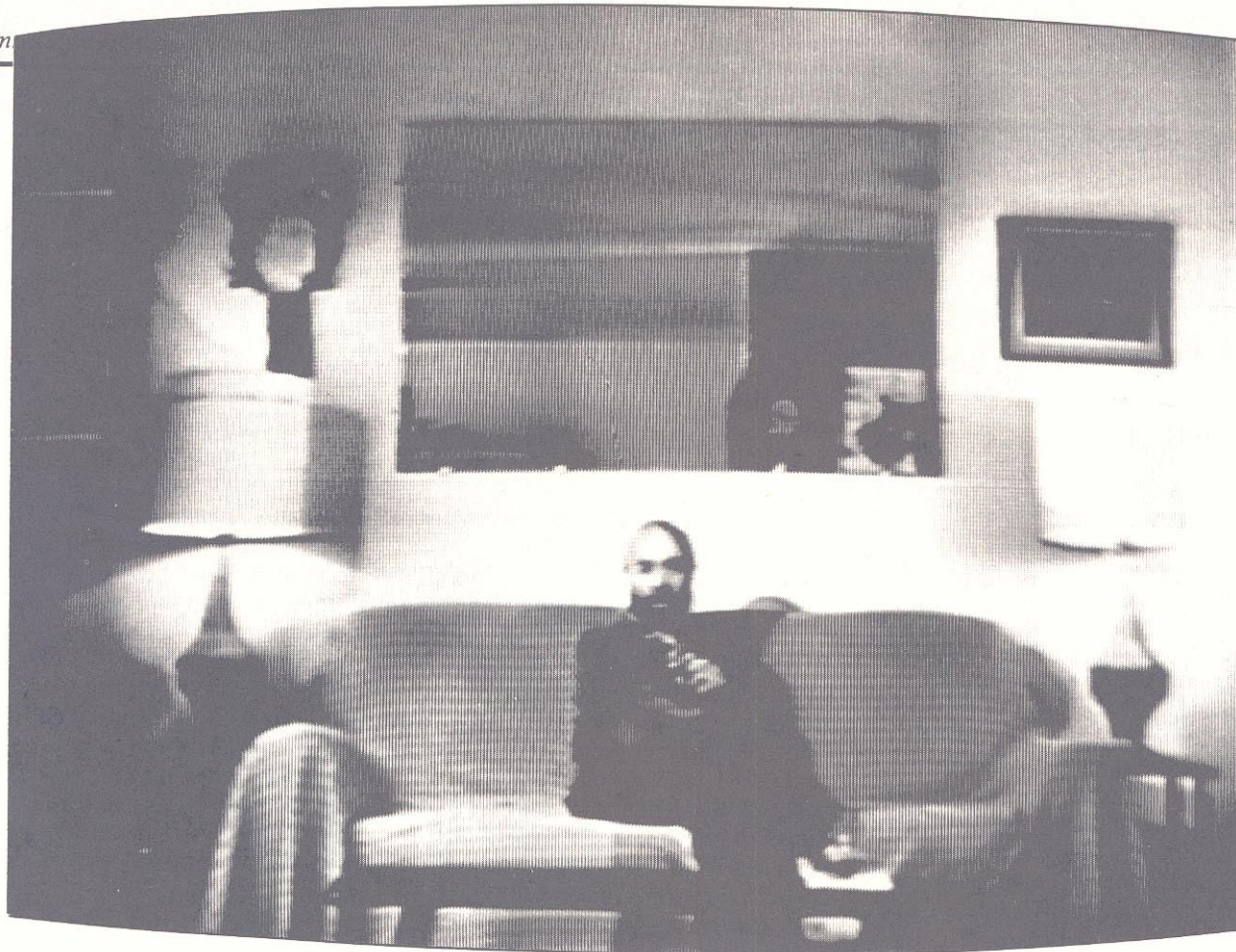
The cable stations within Rogers' system provided limited access to technical facilities (used only when necessary). (Note: artists have always seen cable television systems as an accessible carrier mechanism for the distribution of video information in Canada.)

This series received favorable local newspaper publicity through reviews, and subsequently, the programming (the television art) was sold for future broadcast to CITY-TV, an independent UHF broadcast station in Toronto.

Just like that, what was once art had become television with a difference. I am hopeful, as are all the artists responsible for this series, that all our future audiences will find it to be good television.

As an artist, I find these times of cultural transformation very exciting. A whole generation of artists working with electronic media have just begun to take their work to its next stage of natural cultural evolution. Video art is entering the television environment.

After working for years outside the television system, I find the television environment is beginning to open up. The potential new uses of the medium are unfolding beautifully as the audience is beginning to look for diversity of information. New sources of software will naturally be considered as channel capacities increase. Artists who work with video will find themselves with both the knowhow and the existing programming with a difference in hand. My bet is, given the opportunity, the new audience will recognize this difference. After each program in *Television by Artists* was cablecast, there was an enthusiastic phone response from a stimulated audience.



From "Two Way Mirror," by John Watt, 1980, part of *Television by Artists* series. Photo by Robin Collyer.

Where art galleries and museums run into difficulties trying to entice the public into watching video as art on a monitor in a gallery, the curators of these institutions could extend the reach of their influence by supporting the broadcast of electronic art in their communities.

Electronic Commodities

Some video artists fear their video art will be devalued as a fine art commodity if it is broadcast. In the earliest days of video art production, some artists actually tried to limit their electronic editions, following the economic logic of printmaking. High purchase and rental fees kept the flow of video art information at a minimum.

Such cultural economic theory did permit video to remain separate from television for several years, allowing an elaborate communications aesthetic to develop outside the television industry's artistic specifications. At last this segregated society of video artists began to realize that it

was time to allow their brand of information to flow into the broad cultural environment.

Some artists will become entertainers, some the new educators, and some will continue to concern themselves with the production and distribution of whatever it is they call their art. Some artists will demand political and social change.

Video is an electronic communications medium for the conveyance of information of a visual and aural nature across the distances of space and time. An aesthetics of video will develop naturally as the medium is effectively used for communications by unrelated individuals and groups from diverse sectors of society.

In a world where self-esteem is often based on achieving some sense of personal-social identity, it seems tragic that the electronic media environment we spend half our lives in

offers so little diversity in terms of role models.

Industry television artists produce an extremely limited field of information. Video artists, while their approach to programming television is also severely limited in other ways — they do have another world of information on their minds.

If the cable television systems cannot deliver to their subscribers the information that both these sets of artists would choose to provide, then society as a whole will continue to suffer its present ills of cultural disintegration.

Tom Sherman is an American/Canadian immigrant living in Toronto. He was one of eight video artists representing Canada in the 1980 Venice Biennale. Sherman also works as a freelancer in broadcast television, having most recently been employed as a researcher-writer-performer for FAST FORWARD, TV Ontario's high technology series.

For further information on Television by Artists contact John Watt, 623 Christie Street, Apt. 5, Toronto, Ontario M6G 3E6, Canada, 416-653-8671.

By The Time We Got to Woodstock . . .

Producing Art for Television: The Process of Interacting with Audiences

by Bart Friedman

There are no artist run TV stations. Not yet.

However, just as technology was miniaturized so that people could use it, programming will be geared to smaller audiences. Television will be less expensive to produce and more relevant to human lives. And there will be room for artist-run TV, and carpenter-run TV and doctor-run TV and teacher-run TV and all of that.

In the meantime, the image on our sets, whether a 12-inch Hitachi or a 26-inch freak-out, replicates life in a visual, two dimensional miniature. Making it art is not entirely within the realm of artists. There's the coordination, traffic, lugging, equipment repair, cleaning, booking, managing and fund raising aspects of television which are not the favorite activities of most artists.

There are, however, artists who wear two hats. These are producers whose need is to create a place for artist television in an environment where television usually means money. The vision of a video artist often looks distorted and nasty when viewed from executive suites. How can you run a TV station when your shows are 33 minutes long and bore the pants off middle America? And who knows what video art is anyhow? And who looks at art? And can art save the networks and redeem television?

Video artists know that their work is not for everyone. They still want their audience and they know that it is out there . . . somewhere. The trouble is, video is not like television. It really doesn't look like it. It very often looks like life unfolding (ho hum). Its story develops like sentences and paragraphs and requires that the viewer cast off the trance induced by decades of no meaning and turn on/tune up, a bit. Getting someone to watch it is like asking them to quit smoking or to change their eating habits.

The elements required to get attention begin to emerge as producers start programming in their own towns. In my own experience, nothing works better than getting your own friends and neighbors to participate in local TV shows. The pleasure of seeing themselves and seeing the possibilities for "self-service" television in their own homes is the first and biggest grabber.

The art here, in this first stage of establishing an alternative, is in helping people look good to themselves, putting it together so it's effective and making it look easy (which it is if your equipment is cooperative).

Video art seems to emerge spontaneously as people realize that the technology can be controlled and that the realm of self expression is limitless. People find that poetic images are as accessible to them as poetic words and the result of combining the two is awesome and powerful, especially so when the means to transmit are available. At Media Bus, we just completed a community survey. We mailed out 4000 media questionnaires to the people in Woodstock, New York, to determine

what they wanted to see on the town's cable access channel. The results so far have been predictable. People want to see local artists and musicians; they want programs on self-improvement and how-to shows.

The responses are pretty much extensions of the life curriculum of the people in town. They already know, even though we've been on the channel for only two months, that they want to share their skills and visions with the rest of the people who live here.

Through the facilities of Media Bus, a not-for-profit video center, we have been able to produce programs that explore alternatives in programming. We conduct training workshops and integrate the workshop tapes into our own shows. We've been borrowing video art from friends and we're dusting off golden oldies from our years in Lanesville, New York, where we operated the country's first non commercial, low power broadcast station.

Low power broadcast. That would seem to be the remedy to our media ills; but scurrying to make it happen is not as easy as was promised by the authors who made that proposal to the FCC. Applicants still need a solid organization and a lot of money. The competition for the channels is still weighted to the corporate groups who envision the easy sale of scrambled pay television service or direct-from-the-store catalogues. They have the resources and they are well greased so it won't be a piece of cake for the idealist entrepreneurs in the competitive scramble.

Other outlets, cable and broadcast have their shortcomings. Cable gets only to those who can afford it and broadcast (the commercial and public kind) provides little time for independent producers and has no patience for the kind of audience development which is necessary.

We've been operating with the bright-side concept that while we're using our town's cable access channel, we and our neighbors are eventually going to hit upon some programming concepts that have wide appeal. Programs which other communities will want to see.

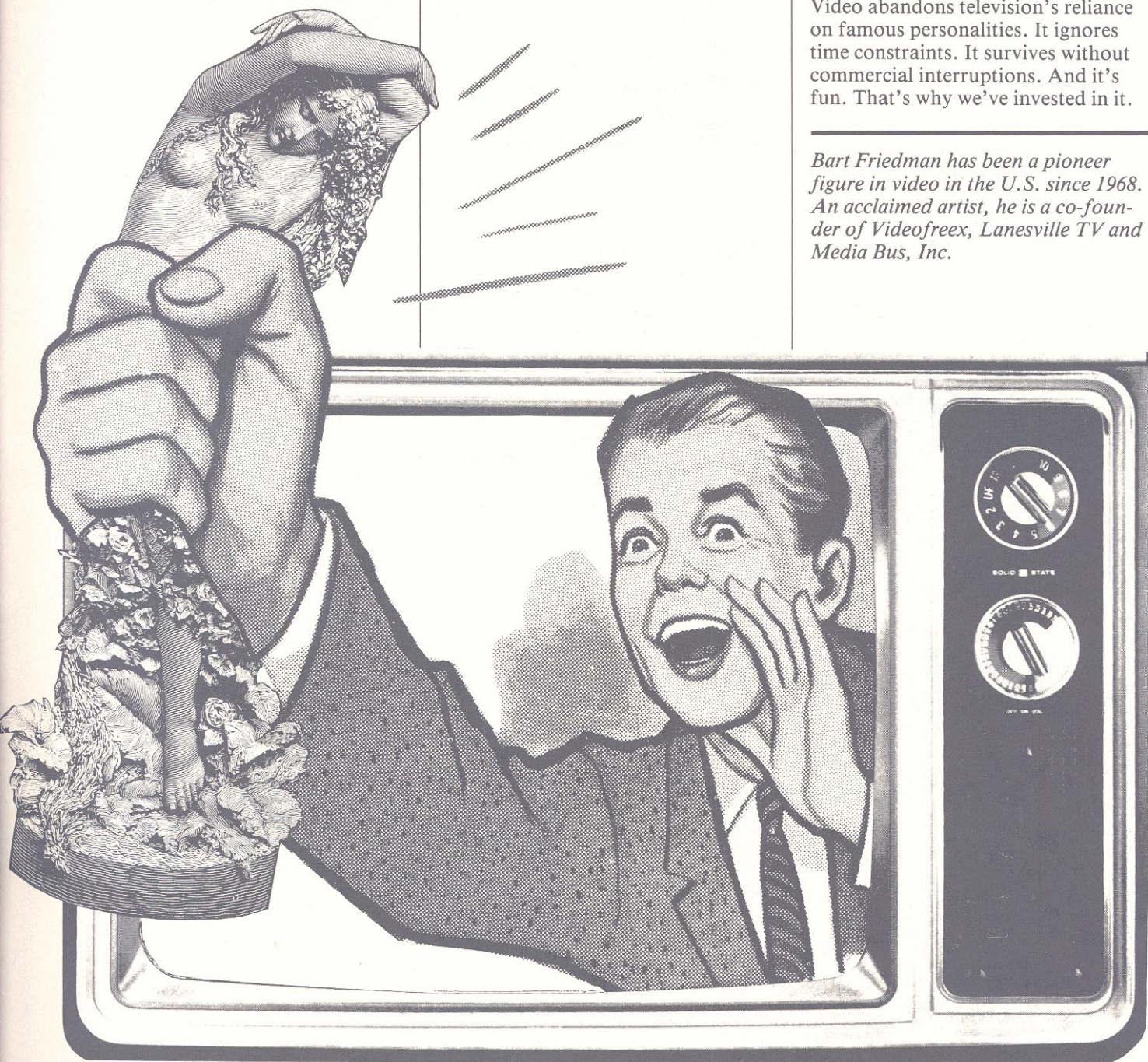
While all the other inevitables are occurring, we know that in a few years there are going to be a thousand towns like ours, with say, sixty channels to fill, twenty-four hours a day. There are going to be two thousand satellites bringing everything everywhere and there is going to be money to pay us for the hundred thousand or so fans we've got out there. Maybe they're all sending ten cents to our station in exchange for a half hour show. What does that come to?

In the meantime we have to deal with staying in production, paying for tape, equipment maintenance and etc., while attempting to discover

new producers from among the many talented people in our town. We're shopping around for a message wheel to run dollar-a-day lost dog announcements on the channel. We'll advertise cars for sale and fill the blank spots with poems, recipes and photographs. We're thinking of an "art gallery of the airways" program where people sell their art or appliances and pay a commission to the channel.

As artists who are producing for television, we are aware that the porta-pak, as an art tool, is connected very closely to the human neurology and can reveal the bias of it's operator, the truth, if you will. Video abandons television's reliance on famous personalities. It ignores time constraints. It survives without commercial interruptions. And it's fun. That's why we've invested in it.

Bart Friedman has been a pioneer figure in video in the U.S. since 1968. An acclaimed artist, he is a co-founder of Videofreex, Lanesville TV and Media Bus, Inc.



New Orleans' Cultural Cable Channel

Arts Groups Join Hands During Cable Franchising, Find New Supporters

by D. Eric Bookhardt

The wiring of urban America with cable television is a modern phenomenon, one that corporate competitors are approaching with all the genteel circumspection of a latter day gold rush. Because it is the kind of situation where cities often get caught off guard, seduced, bullied, and sometimes conned by the Attilas of electronic media, whose legions seem to live only for the lure of the franchise, cultural and arts programming have historically not done very well.

Except in New Orleans. There the cultural and arts community has won unprecedented concessions from the winner and top bidders in the cable franchise competition. Why New Orleans?

It could have, perhaps should have ended up as a replay of the Houston experience, where a fast-talking town got taken for a ride by pin-striped vested interests, in a veritable carnival of animals, an orgy of porcine corporate bodies gorging themselves at the public trough. Franchising a cable company is like licensing a utility; — if they run hog wild, it is probably the community's fault.

Since New Orleans has not done anything of a pioneering nature in communications since the late forties or early fifties, this sudden display of enlightened aggression is a bit startling. Most startling of all is what they asked for, and have indeed been promised by the franchise winner, Cox Cable Communications, based in Atlanta.



What was asked for and subsequently promised included:

"A studio, well furnished with production equipment, lighting, audio, and all other equipment necessary for quality broadcast. (At a cost estimated at \$94,000 in the Cox bid.)"

"Staff, in numbers and positions necessary to adequately maintain equipment and production. (Estimated local access personnel to number 65 by year 5 in the Cox bid.)"

"Mobile equipment to allow coverage of cultural and citywide events as deemed appropriate by the Cultural Cable Coalition."

"Signals to and from the studio, and channels on both home subscriber and institutional network. (A satellite uplink was included by Cox.)"

"Operating funds to be provided by the cable company." Funding that would amount to hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, according to cable company proposals.

It is probably fair to say that it is the city fathers along with some of the cable companies who are among the most surprised by this curious turn of events. The romantic-but-seedy "Big Easy" (as the city is colloquially known) is not often held up as a model of progressive enlightenment, but that is indeed what is now happening. A curious twist.

And the way in which it happened is a model of urban guerrilla tactics carried out by the city's Cultural Cable Coalition, a plan of approach that others might well emulate. Cities now in the process of franchising cable companies, Tucson, St. Louis, Tampa, Miami, Fort Worth, Chicago, and others, are in constant communications with the New Orleans group, which now functions as a consulting agency. Ralph Kolhoft of the Tucson Arts Commission recently told us that he is hopeful that his city "will be next in achieving the kind of cultural cable commitment obtained by New Orleans."

Certainly cultural access channels are not a new idea. They have been attempted in other places, but did not succeed due to various loopholes which did not provide for such items as funding. (A mere channel slot by itself serves no purpose, after all.)

What it takes to organize a community for a cultural cable channel is firstly, a base that is broad and diverse in its community support. In New Orleans the Contemporary Arts Center provides such common ground by being accessible to wide community interests. (In other places, an activist Arts Council, or as in Tucson's case, a city Arts Commission could provide the necessary base of operations).

The prime difficulty in many arts and cultural communities are the ever present cliques and rivalries (and in some places cable companies have attempted divide and conquer tactics.) Strong and sensitive leadership is therefore necessary to maintain unity and thus credibility.

Contemporary Arts Center President Sharon Litwin joined with video artist Denise Vallon in the primary task of organizing the disparate arts and culture community. Because the CAC is broad-based and very open to all aspects of the community, it was possible to enlist a variety of interests ranging from the Audubon Park Commission to the Youth Inspirational Choir.

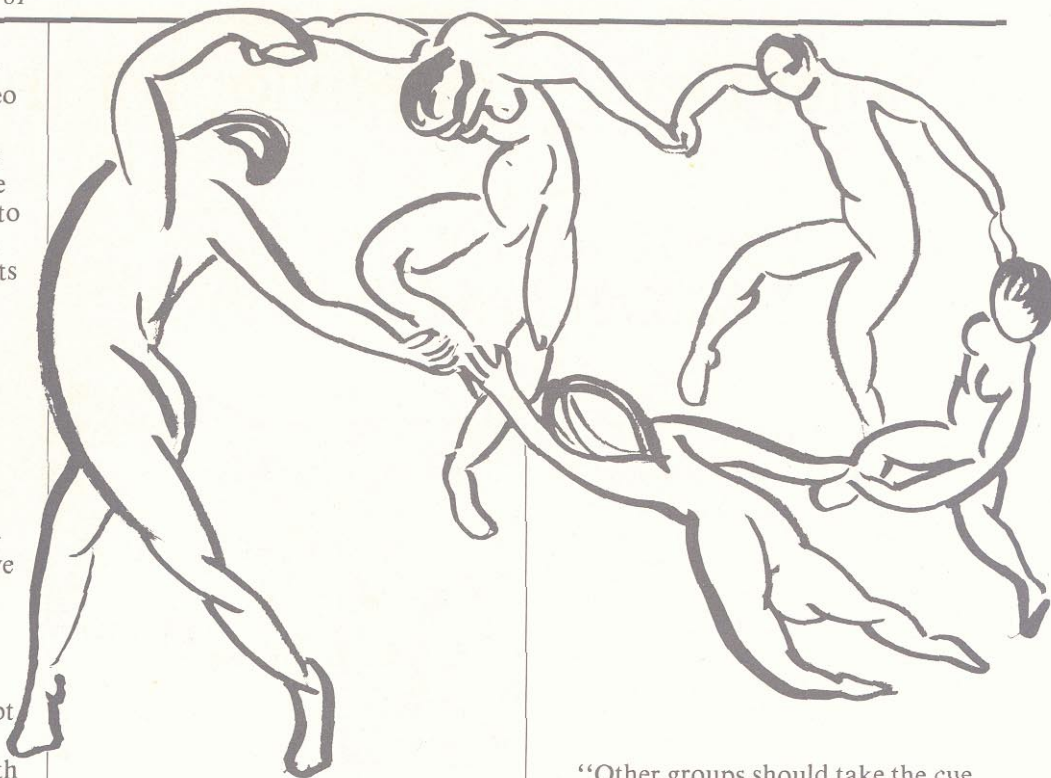
Currently there are over 80 member groups in the Cultural Cable Coalition. (A similar group in Chicago has enlisted over 140). Having such an obviously broad base of support, the next requisite, continuous media play to keep the public eye focused on the ongoing franchising process, may be more easily achieved.

When cable companies enter an urban market, they naturally attempt to play politics as well as possible. Consequently deals are often cut with city councilmen. The practice of "renting" prominent citizens to serve as local stockholders, (relatively minor investments from them that will be worth fortunes later on) are all too frequent.

In New Orleans the constant publicity generated by the Cultural Cable Coalition kept the actions of city council members amazingly well behaved and above board in one of the most hyper-political cities. Toward this end, well known personages from outside the immediate sphere of interests were called upon to speak at public meetings of the coalition: Congresswoman Lindy Boggs and Atlanta City Councilman James Bond were featured.

Such political "celebrities" helped publicize not only the cultural coalition, but also the franchising process in general.

Making ambitious but ultimately realistic demands is one way to let cable companies know that your city is not an easy mark to be seduced and abandoned. The fact is, cable companies need cities to franchise more than cities need them. Otherwise they would not spend millions each year on systems that can take the better part of a decade to show a profit.



They obviously believe the light glimmering at the end of the tunnel is a pot of gold, and they are probably right. So it is only reasonable for the community to demand its cut.

The three companies that responded to the Cultural Cable Coalition's requests most generously and forthrightly were also the ones who came out on top. Storer, American Cablevision, and Cox Cable. All met or exceeded the Coalition's requests. Cox attempted to balance a liability — higher user cost, with greater revenues for the city. Interestingly, it won the franchise.

Actually, all of the top three, and a few of the other firms as well, tended to be fair, realistic, and forthcoming after the community and the City let it be known that there would be no quick fix, and everyone would have to do their homework. (To their credit, it should be noted that the city council started working on their cable ordinance years ago.)

Cox Cable, in addition to having a very well designed package, has been very gracious, even enthusiastic, in welcoming the activities of the Cultural Cable Coalition, perhaps because of their personnel and stockholders who actively support the arts.

"Other groups should take the cue from them . . ." says Marty Lafferty, Cox' national Director of Programming Services (who also has an MFA from Yale.)

Further emphasizing that the Cultural Cable Coalition was "terrific" Lafferty noted that they "had never encountered a cultural community so well organized as New Orleans."

He noted that he thought they were successful due to credibility, (a broad base), well organized planning, which included a space for a studio (in the Contemporary Arts Center) and plans for a mobile van. Lafferty, with admirable good spirit, admonishes other communities to "get organized, and go to the competitors . . ."

And now, following the example of the Cultural Cable Coalition, cities such as Chicago, Tuscon, Springfield, Mass., Miami, Tampa, and Fort Worth, are doing just that.

D. Eric. Bookhardt is a New Orleans journalist.

Cable: Demon or Savior for the Arts

New Opportunity for Artists, Funders Should Lead the Way

by Melisande Charles

The development of cable and home viewing equipment is as important to the Space Age as the printing press was to the Industrial Age.

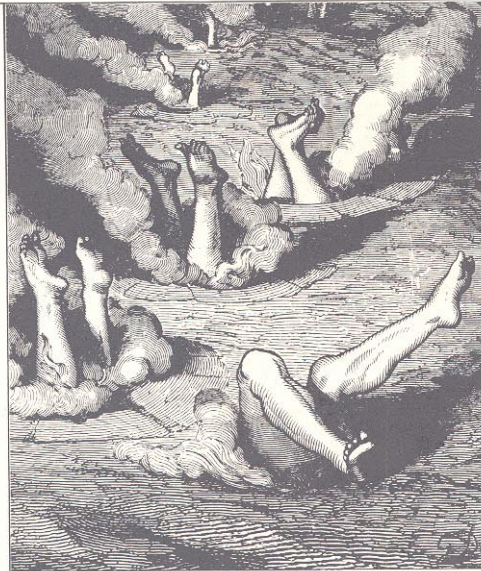
When the dust settles on the franchise grab, the 40 to 60 channels promised in most markets will emerge as virgin territory and produce a programming monster. Competition for shares of member audiences, advertising and funds to create programs to attract audiences on those channels will be intense.

The future opportunities for arts development and program dissemination in this market seem limitless. The arts service network in the U.S. should work to communicate to the broad-based arts industry what the realities and issues are in combining cable and disk production with the arts. This would demand that these umbrella organizations do their homework as they did with CETA, artist survival programs and establishing arts districts.

Their leadership, in convening workshops for cable education and information dissemination is of vast importance.

Arts umbrella leadership does not mean that arts groups and artists should abdicate their responsibility to organize and advocate for their own interest. This is a significant part of buying into the cable potential.

But individual artists and arts organizations, for the most part, are so focused on their current activities and the harassment of unrelenting fiscal problems, that they do not have the time to individually collect the information to help them meet this new challenge.



Arts Commissions and Councils themselves must also decide what their participation beyond dispensing information might be. Investigation into channel ownership and local or regional distribution as a means to develop their own earned income for production or production grants, is an interesting concept. Hopefully they could also provide a market sensitive to artistic innovation and creative development.

Funding for cable is going to be a complex but interesting problem. Arts channel operators, who must provide daily programming, will have to find ways through advertising and membership to not only operate the channel, but provide incentive for local program production and purchase of other programming.

Arts producers might have to invest a portion of their budgets toward video production. This will place a strain, not only on their budgets, but on the decision-making that will guide the future artistic direction of their organization. Funding organizations will, I predict, begin to weigh funding requests for production by evaluating the artistic merit of an organization, their ability to translate successfully to a new medium and the number of people reached by these activities.

Large production companies, such as CBS, will invest in and absorb the more obvious arts program potentials which exist across the country. Smaller creative local arts production organizations will, as usual, face the more severe problems of starting from ground zero to attract support for access to production equipment and facilities, as well as successfully tying their work into the distribution systems.

Here is where many entrepreneurial opportunities exist. Regional production companies, utilizing the talents and works of local arts groups, could begin to aggressively enter this new growth market and become an important supplier of both arts and education materials.

For arts groups to think of funding for cable production in the same terms as live performance would be a mistake. It must, I feel, be thought of in terms of earned income — either from distribution or attracting the entrepreneur to a quality product.

Considering the present bleak funding situation for the creative, producing arts groups, cable is the one bright hope on the horizon. It is essential that these creative producing organizations learn all they can about entering this new and unfamiliar market.

There is a potential to increase earned income by creating a broader public recognition of their work by encouraging increased attendance for live performance and touring opportunities in new markets. Sports has gained audiences and wide visibility by television coverage, even though it was originally feared that TV would cut sharply into their gates. The experience of seeing known performers "in the flesh" is a proven human dynamic.

Arts organizations and institutions should also make sure they are familiar with contractual arrangements and obligations, distribution rights involving satellite, cable and video disk and other arrangements which produce fees for them from their productions and participation. If not, the same lack of business knowledge, creative market development and management skills that has prevailed in the arts community for too long will destroy their ability to take charge of their own future artistic development.

The cooperation and coordination required to take on this new medium

is enormous. A reasonable trust level must be forged between the arts service organizations and the producers or a golden chance for significantly increased community exposure to the arts and a new source of earned income will be missed.

The employment potential for artists is significant in all areas of cable activity. Artists, actors, musicians, writers, composers, dancers, choreographers, etc., will find work all over the country. This potential, in a field that experiences one of the highest unemployment rates, gives service organizations one of the best reasons for heavy cable educational and workshop involvement.

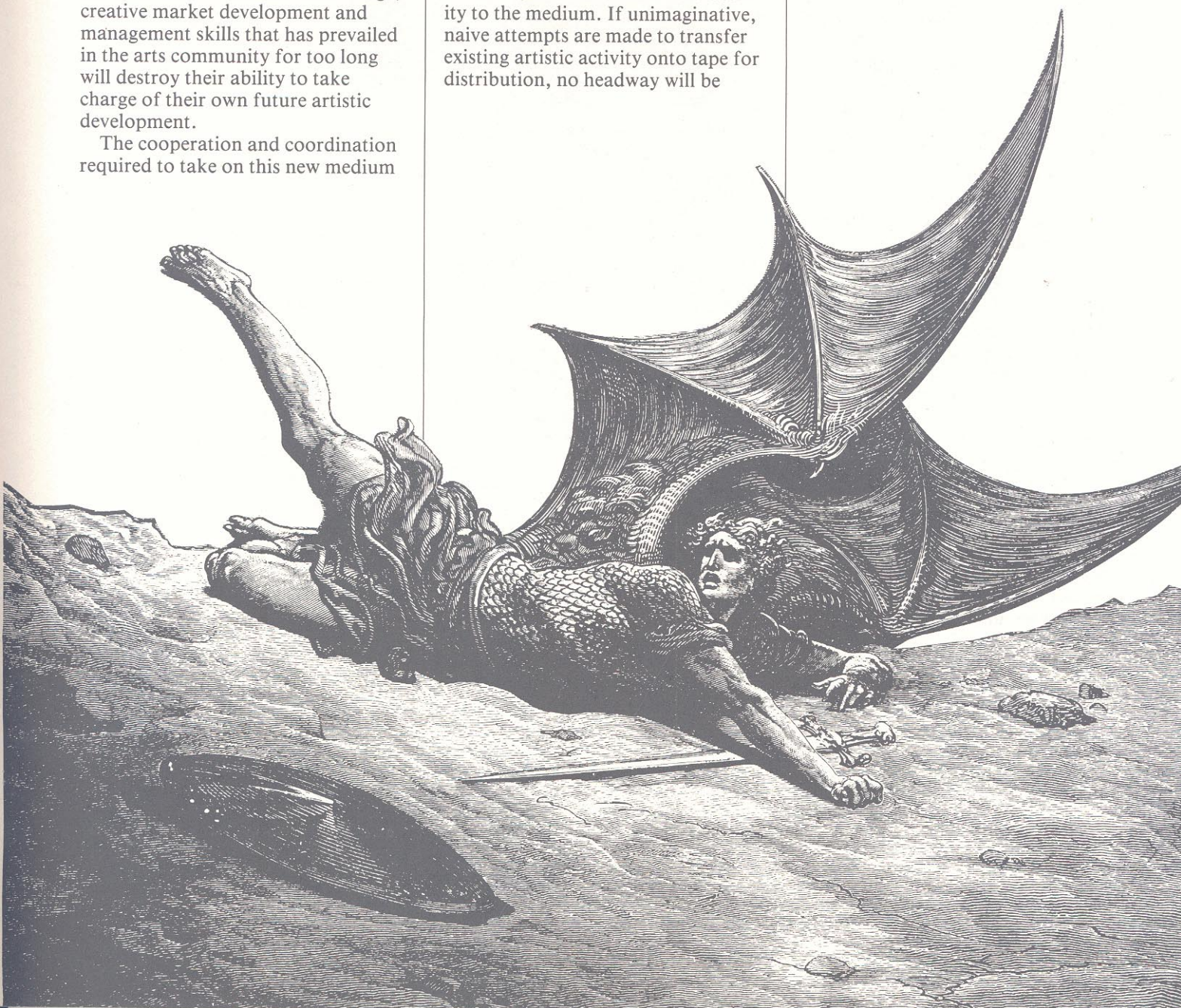
Beyond this, promotion of quality production should be encouraged as paramount by focusing on successful transference of current artistic activity to the medium. If unimaginative, naive attempts are made to transfer existing artistic activity onto tape for distribution, no headway will be

made to develop exciting artistic programming and a significant new viewing audience.

Artists are central to creation and here, for once, is a place where individual artists should not be closed out, but courted and trained in the medium's technology.

Arts Councils, Commissions, video access groups and educational units can provide a vital leadership beneficial to the arts and artists, if they are willing to take the risks to make their way through this transition period with vision and creativity.

Melisande Charles is an artist and Executive Director of the Minneapolis Arts Commission.



AccessProfile

Changing Channels for the Arts: Community Video Centers as Catalyst

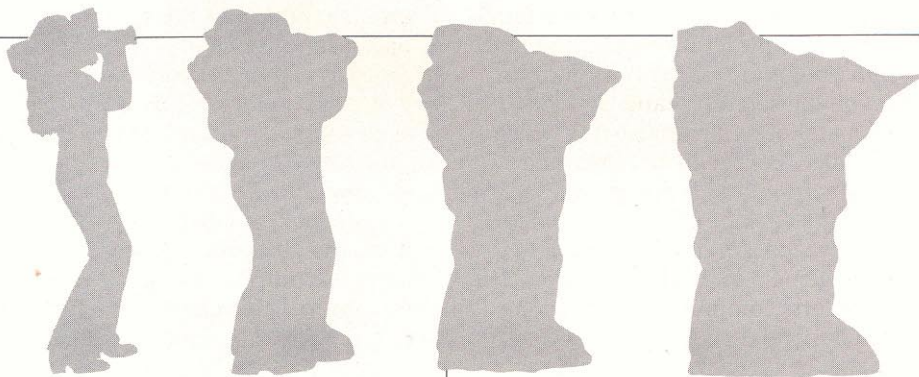
by Tom Borrup

Minnesota — land of lakes — modern America's most prolific source of Vice Presidents, scotch tape, cooperatives, iron ore and everything remotely related to flour. Its prosperous Twin Cities harbor a flourishing cultural community. Dollars spent on the arts are unparalleled. The Twin Cities are, in short, a cultural oasis sprouting up from the Midwest's endless fields of corn and wheat.

Cable TV has not yet come to Minneapolis or St. Paul. No one at present could confidently predict when construction might begin as both cities grapple with seemingly endless franchising processes.

Bringing together this active community with this promising communications media is an idea which has been alive and well here for many years.

The ingredients for rich and dynamic community television in the Twin Cities are assembling, waiting to be combined like the flour, salt and water that will become a beautiful bread: the rich cultural institutions and scores of arts groups, the maturing community of independent videomakers and the promised plethora of local access channels. And, finally a catalyst is needed: a yeast activating the dough, doubling its bulk and resulting in the sustenance common to every table.



That catalyst is University Community Video, a media arts center founded on the idea of community television. As one of the country's oldest and largest video access centers, UCV has been training videomakers, making the tools of video production available and planting the seeds of community television for eight years.

The video center was incorporated in 1973 in anticipation of the coming of cable to the Twin Cities. Cable didn't materialize, yet the center grew, turning to public television and closed circuit distribution to bring student and independently produced video to regional and national audiences. For four years UCV produced *Changing Channels*, an award-winning weekly program broadcast on KTCA, Twin Cities Public Television.

While video as an art form has been important to UCV, many of the center's endeavors have been to introduce the use of video to the performing and visual arts, human services and to other groups as a means to reach and interact with audiences.

UCV engages in the gamut of services necessary for a media arts center to fulfill its purposes: training, equipment access, video exhibition, visiting

artists, facilitation of production, distribution of completed works and advocacy to strengthen and support independent video production. But it is the interaction of video with the broader cultural and social environment that has been of particular interest.

When cable finally does arrive, community television in the Twin Cities will benefit from the extraordinary fortune of this preparation.

I'd like to focus on just two specific projects UCV carried out which were designed to accomplish the complex introduction of video to the arts. A third project is in the wings, one which the Center hopes will put that combination to work, or will knead the dough so the ingredients will begin to rise together. The Arts/Cable Exchange, a major national conference in Minneapolis in November, 1981 will explore the potentials in cooperative relationships between the arts and cable and the role of the media arts center in shaping that union.

Performing Arts Video Project

In 1978 with the help of local arts agencies, UCV began a structured outreach effort designed to: 1) assist performing artists in their develop-

ment by providing them with video for use as a feedback and documentation tool; 2) develop UCV's sensitivity towards the needs of the performing arts by working closely with artists and arts groups, and 3) put performing artists and videomakers into a working relationship where they would jointly create a visual product.

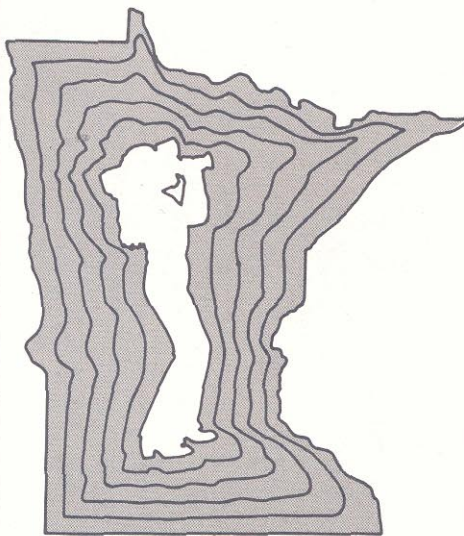
Through the Performing Arts Video Project (PAVP), UCV advertised low-cost video documentation services. For a nominal investment, a video producer would tape a rehearsal or performance. Nothing elaborate, just a straight-on recording which the performers could watch over and over for self-criticism, could use as a resume tape, or could present to a funding source as documentation.

In two years, over two dozen groups took advantage of the service and many of those came back again and again. As performer and producer reflected on their efforts and worked together repeatedly, meaningful relationships grew and a common visual language evolved. Something more than the straight-on recording often resulted.

One of the greatest obstacles to bringing the arts to the tube has been this lack of a common visual language and a resistance to — even a hatred for — the medium of “television” by the performing artist. From the other side of the camera, the video artist expects to create and manipulate images — their images, their perception of what is before them. Attempts at control over the video images by the performers is often viewed by the video artist as an act of aggression.

PAVP tried to engender a friendship — to begin a conversation. Only by working in concert with the video artist, respecting and understanding common needs and by speaking a common visual language, can the performing artist bring himself to audiences via the medium in a way in which they feel does their work justice. And, only by being sensitive to the needs and concerns of the performing artist can the media artist create something truly enhanced by and in tune with the art of performance.

The resulting work appearing on the TV screen won't really be performance as we know it, nor will it replace performance. It will be unique — an art borrowing from and synthesizing others, which can bring a particular perception of performance to many people. It can reach audiences which a live performance would not otherwise reach; an audience that we hope will, through the viewing experience, come to appreciate the performing art.



Public Service Announcement Project

What can exposure over mass market television do for an arts or community service group? In less than 18 months over 20 Twin Cities groups found that a 30-second Public Service Announcement (PSA) on commercial broadcast TV could do wonders for their public image, to their telephone lines and ultimately to their continued existence.

In the absence of cable, one of the only vehicles for access to the airwaves is the PSA on commercial TV, usually run during late night or other time slots less desired by the paying customer.

At low cost, UCV has offered professional production of these commercial-like spots for low-budget human service and cultural groups. Again, a UCV producer would work closely with the group, cooperatively arriving at a clear message which will come across effectively on video. Client groups would most often provide the talent or voices for the spot.

TV stations gladly accepted the completed PSAs (dubbed to quad through the University of Minnesota) which could do nothing but enhance their FCC standing. Client groups found the results well worth their investment. Many were ecstatic.

Unlike PAVP, this project was intended to demonstrate what the medium can do when applied to an audience. First (through PAVP) we learn how to deal with this camera pointed at us, how to look at it, what to say to it (visually). Then we make this little tape and put it on the air . . .

In 1955, Revlon Cosmetics discovered television and became an overnight sensation. Consumers were running out to the nearest department store to experience in person what looked so good on TV. Demand for Living Lipsticks far exceeded the company's ability to produce them. The competition was taking serious losses.

Community television does not present such cut throat competition, but the power of the medium cannot be understated. Most of America lives by television, spends a hefty chunk of its conscious life in front of one. Television is a reality affecting every aspect of life and culture. It is, however, one of the most exciting and limitless artistic media we know and it has proven — although perhaps unrealized — potential for humanitarian undertakings.

This is the message UCV conveys to the Twin Cities in words and in its actions.

Community television can be a major resource for the arts, but it won't come easily. Given all the right ingredients, it could still fall flat. Much care must go into the mixture. The leavening must be deliberately sweetened and mixed in proper proportions.

UCV's two “introductory” projects were small attempts to activate that mixture. The results were successful. Larger batches loom ahead.

Tom Borrup is Executive Director of University Community Video and Editor of CTR.

The Lively Arts vs. Mainstream Culture

"Poets and Writers Must Take Matters in Their Own Hands . . ."

"TV is the new Vietnam." Robert Bly

"It is best to turn on the set after all the stations go off the air and just watch the snow fall . . ." Louis Jenkins

"A man comes in the room who makes your skin shiver. He says 'I want the television set.' You say, 'Have it.'" Michael Dennis Browne

— 3 Minnesota poets on television

by Michael Hazard

For most serious artists in America, and poets and writers in particular, there's a psychic gap between the newer media and the traditional arts that can be fairly described as a black hole.

For those with little history in their heads, the roots of this gap go way back. Philip Freneau, America's first or second poet, said of New York City in revolutionary times: "How can a poet hope for an audience in a city where there are not 3 people possessed of elegant ideas?"

The roots of the separation of serious art from the public in America have been traced in part to "The Great Audience" by Gilbert Seldes. Seldes, the man who coined the phrase "the lively arts," calls it the "treason of the intellectuals."

Awareness of this longterm separation of the arts from the mainstream of American culture is the appropriate context for the present relations between high art and mass media. TV has commonly been mistaken by serious artists and serious people (and poets are the most serious among us) as pop culture, period. TV's commercial potential took it directly from invention to broadcasting. TV was born full-blown into mass tedium.

For this reason many parts of our cultural apparatus, and I'd add the most literate and specialized parts in particular, have lagged in seeing the ways they can use this technology for their own devices.

Compared to print, which has had several hundred years to develop, TV's capacity to serve all parts of society is sadly and badly underdeveloped. TV has been prodded by Madison Avenue's adsters to broadcast to the largest, regular, least weird audiences possible. We could even view the general boycott of TV by the smarter classes — you know, the classic, "I never watch television myself . . ." — as an act of civil disobedience.

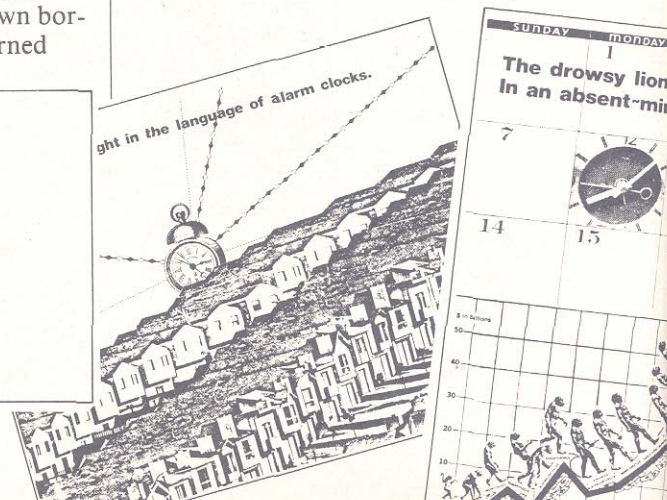
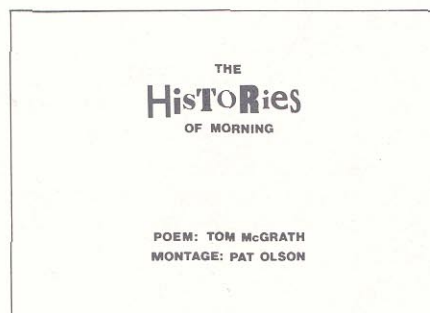
The proverbial cable fable is going to end the telly's illiteracy, right? We'll still have the schlock of the old, but now there's bandwidth for everyone. This dream of the democratization of our most used and abused medium, combined with my own boring stories about public TV turned

me into a cable freak this past year. I answered the call for a public interest advocate in St. Paul's cable franchising. I started the process as excited about the dream as I once was about public TV.

About 10 feet of printed documents later, I confess I've lost a lot of my steam and for good reasons. After scouring the industry for examples of creative writing programming, little is. Outside of an odd library review program in Columbus, an experimental cable poetry idea in the Bronx, none of the cable reps in town have been able to provide any specific examples of literacy production. It's all in the future.

Poet Robert Bly calls that living in the moonpalace — it's not this poem, it's the next one. And it is as basic as this — only one of the 7 proposals for cable systems in St. Paul (a \$300 million system over the life of the franchise) includes plans for hiring one writer. I'm not talking hiring a poet, just a person to write for local origination programming.

Well so much for that side of the world. To speak to the poets and writers for a second, unconscious acts of civil disobedience aside, it is obvious more poets and writers are going to have to take matters in their own hands. Why is it important? If we agree TV is how we are doing most of our communicating, to ig-



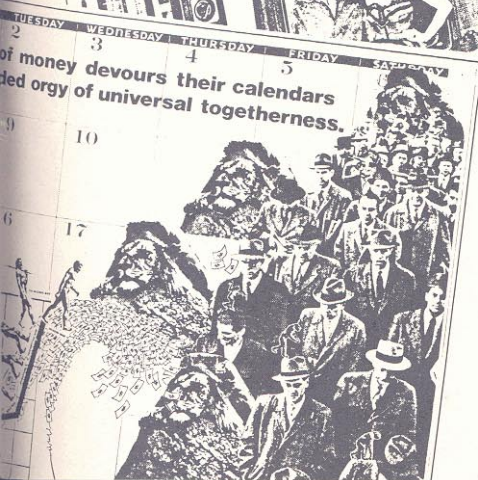
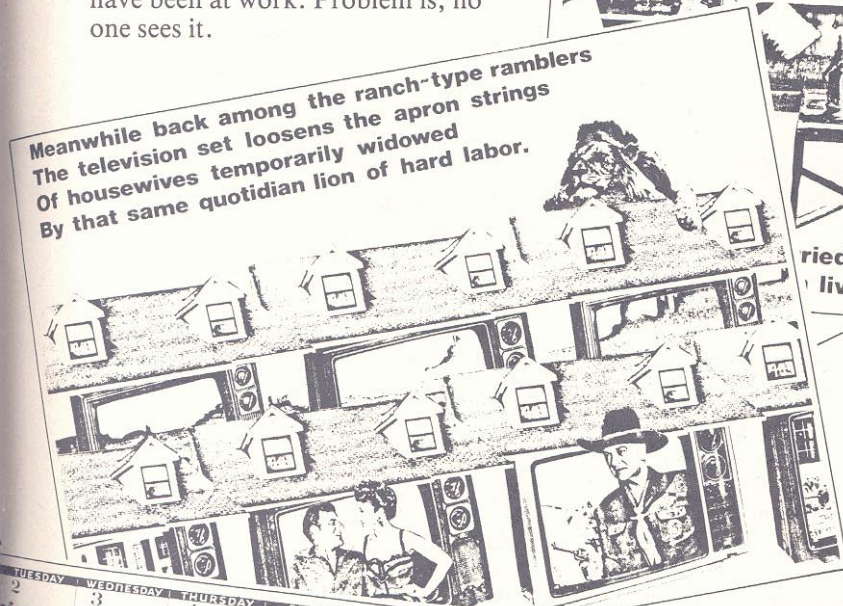
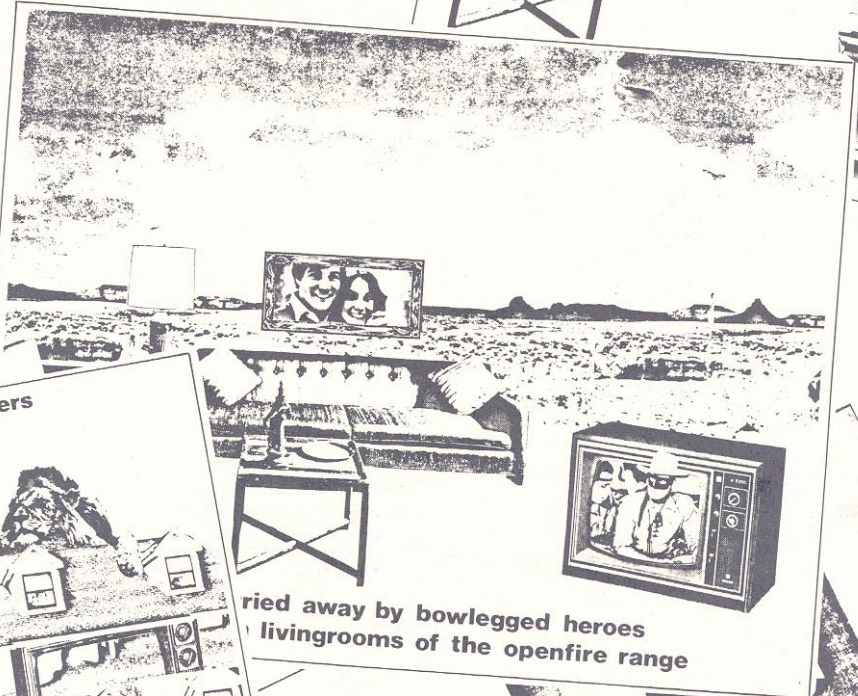
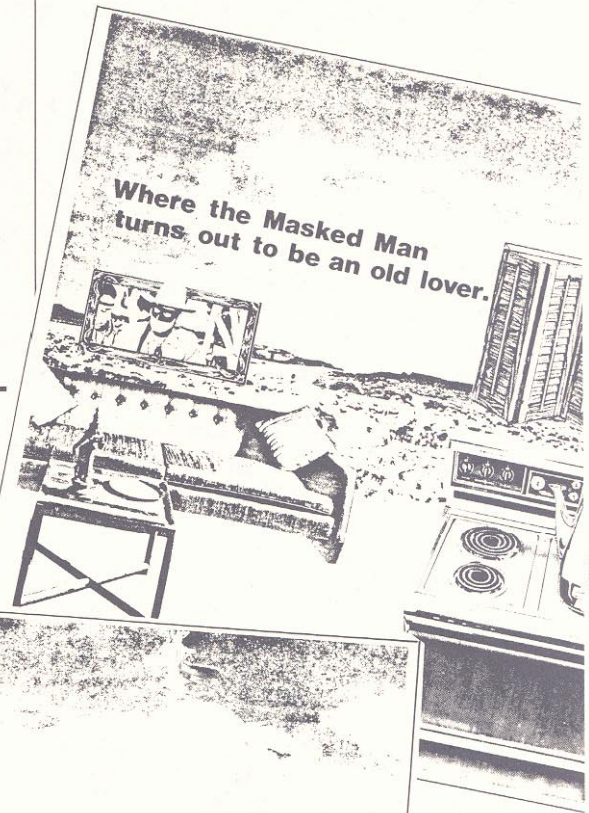
nore it is to invite psychic disaster. Or in the words of another poet, Tom McGrath, "what we don't know kills us."

Just looking at cable and poetry economically, it is small wonder so little has been done. We are talking about the poorest of the arts — poetry — and the most expensive — television. I have no bottom line. I do know TV is not a book. For poetry to work through TV it will take a new poetry, not just dramatic recitals of old verse. Perhaps the heaviest handed dramatic irony of all is that it is Madison Avenue's techniques — of memory, rhyme, repetition, word play, the use of words on the screen, and visuals — which have shown the way for those who see TV can be art.

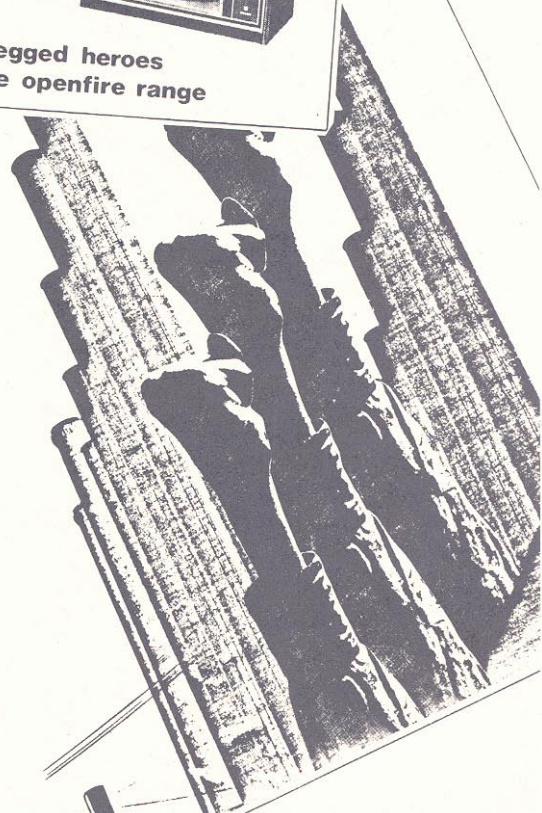
For those hearty or foolish enough to want to cablecast poetry, start with your local poets and resources. For the converted who want to import some poetry special, this sampler of superior movies and audiorecordings, the winners of 2 of the CIE's Walt Whitman international media competitions, is the tip of what's been done. Don't let the invisibility of poetry media trick you into believing it doesn't exist. Lots of sensitive hands have been at work. Problem is, no one sees it.

It is a distribution problem facing every special interest which wants to exploit cable technology. In every field, from medicine — lovers of Shakespeare will not want to miss Jonathon "The Body in Question" Miller's series of Shakespeare this PBS season — to poets, people have been creating media all over the world about every subject. But the fanciest communications media in history have also proved quite local. TV is hardly ever recycled.

Michael Hazard of St. Paul is a poet, videomaker and agent of the CIE (Center for Internationalizing the study of English), among other things.



**Somewhere
the factories
shake in the fists
of the workers.**



Taking Chances With TV:

What Do Artists Really Want From Cable?

by Ben Davis

Art is a language. Its structure expresses hope. Its intent is illumination. The materials of art are basic connectives between the body and the idea. Artist's bodies are tools. They do work.

As a material, television merges the body and the idea. Its physical structure its primary-light and sound, the electromagnetic spectrum. Video is ubiquitous.

Art on Television means a primary experience passed through a secondary cultural illusion. Bad television is interactive. You turn it off. The artist using television approaches a mass audience who expects to be entertained. Research in fabricating ideas is interfaced with product sales. The artist has two options with TV. The work can either be live or can be correlative recording or both.

If you look at something long enough, I've discovered that the meaning goes away.
 Andy Warhol, 1980.

But the question is how this relates to the use of arts programming on cable TV. The "two choices" are clear here also: we either separate arts channels (Those Incredible Artists!) or we integrate art into access channels or . . . both. But what does the artist really want? George Wallace standing in the doorway of the arts channel saying to a piece of "odd work," "get out of here you don't belong"? Or do artists want to make money just like in the gallery (paid by the minute)?

There is no harm in an art channel that pays people for work. In fact it is entertaining programming. Like Jasper Johns. Feels good doesn't it? Has market/history structure doesn't it? Runs on premium doesn't it?

Good taste is the first refuge of the insecure.

Marshall McLuhan, 1970.

The prospect of channels devoted to art is a good one. But will artists run them? Will programming be selected democratically? Or will the channel have to have a "quality standard" to keep an economic base? Will some work be "avant garde" while "experimental" work is on late at night? Will art schools teach students how to make the right stuff to get on the arts channel and get paid?

The problems with the arts channel concept are not new. They are comfortable old problems that have time honored rationalizations. The arts channel will be o.k. I have always thought that the arts should have its own wire service coverage like the UPI or AP. Up to date conceptual continuities, material price index, the worldview etc. It's equally as important as the wars and gold prices. The art channel format! Twenty-four hours of art.

Live programming would be harmless too. With an arts channel you would be comfortable with the unexpected. Everything is historically sanctified. The MUSEUM without walls.

The referencing of art in an ongoing stream of information, however, makes that stream multi-dimensional. The public access channels of cable television could provide the most varied stream of information carried by the medium. The participation of the artist within this context I feel provides the greatest potential for correlation of images.

The role of the artist simply stated is to demonstrate creativity. To take risks. The problems inherent in integrating arts programming into a social memory bank such as an access channel are not the old comfortable problems of market stimulation. The artist is localized. No longer the vast network notion of reputation spreading via the extended gallery as in a

product oriented market. The notion of consistently using free access to television, live or tape, and relating it to a localized social context has little of the "mass glitter" of big time art. It is work. It involves people instead of clean white walls.

Most artists working in video have been attracted to the possibilities of cable access. The cynicism of the past ten years has made public access "unfashionable" for the arts mostly because public access is pedestrian and poor. There's no money or romance. The prospect of specialized artists networks and channels, however, have none of the adventure of fresh time/space. The access channels insure interaction by being a risk, by describing the timing of the unknown.

Video . . . must be defined as the potential availability of an infinite amount of information through the TV set.

Richard Robinson, 1978.

An infinite amount of art. Not traveling in a continuous self-referring mode but free to intersect with the recordings of other human events at many levels. The narrative/ruminative combinations are infinite. This introduction of art work on an equal footing with other forms of TV programming makes a new model of thought. It makes a quantum matrix capable of constantly moving itself to new patterns of understanding, new originals.

Let there be artists networks and channels and let the artist be paid for working. But the new idea, the promise of correlation and imminence lies in the access channel. The artist takes chances, so should TV.

Ben Davis is an artist, is head of the Video Department, Atlanta College of Art, and founder and former President of Access Atlanta, Inc.

The Public Arts Network (PAN): A New York Access Network for the Arts?

by William F. Rushton

Sudden excitement about "cultural channels" on cable television is long overdue, and yet — in its current form — this excitement masks a hidden, cruel hoax.

What might be called the Big Bucks Fantasy has it that the New Television will somehow solve the chronic operating deficits of major cultural institutions, open up the chance for regular and well-paying employment for a large number of currently under-employed independent producers, and perhaps — ultimately — transform the aggregate American television enterprise into the most-seen and best-paying "art" form of all time.

The Big Bucks Fantasy is a cruel hoax because none of the above are true, or worse yet, possible. Continued fixation on the fantasy, meanwhile, diverts time, energy and other resources that could be better spent on more immediate — and more realizable — goals. What is possible is so much more interesting than what is not possible, anyway — but before we get on to that part of the story, it may be useful to finish clearing the BBF debris out of the way.

BBF owns much of its mystique to the sudden announcement over the last calendar year of seven new satellite/cable and public television cultural ventures.

Of the commercial entrants, ABC's "ARTS" would appear to be the best-positioned, since it will be carried astride Warner-Amex's acclaimed Nickelodeon children's feed (700 affiliates and 3.5 million subscribers as of the beginning of 1981) and will allow participating cable operators double boasts of community service from one channel.

Charles Dolan's consortium for "Bravo!" has a potential captive market of one million subscribers in participating systems, and is shrewdly sharing its transponder with a soft-porn "action" series that many market surveys say small-town cable subscribers want the most. Third entrant CBS Cable is on the wrong satellite, and will try to go it with commercials — the most difficult path of those announced to date.

On the public television side of the ledger, we have the Carnegie PACE proposal (Performing Arts, Culture & Entertainment), which has seen two clones: one at the hands of Larry Grossman — in which cultural institutions are asked to mortgage their future to PBS; and another at the hands of a handful of Grossman's largest and best-endowed affiliates — who have broken away to form their own gang, and thereby guarantee civil war as usual among the mandarins of America's beleaguered "public" television. For added interest there are multiple ironies in the fact that ex-CBS prexy Arthur Taylor, the sixth entrant, has outbid both PBS and Time-Life for the entire BBC product inventory, and for a measly six million dollars, yet. Public television couldn't even close ranks around that one in time, so how can they reasonably expect the public or the nation's arts institutions to take their cultural channel proposal seriously?

The seventh entrant is the one with the least publicity and hence the most interesting potential: Brian O'Doherty's National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) venture with the Appalachian Community Service Network (ACSN). But unlike the others, ACSN has few cable systems lined up for its ongoing service, and even less finance capital to work with.



What all these ventures share in common is a centralized bureaucracy that will make all the programming decisions and control all of whatever money there is. None (except perhaps ACSN) will open up any new avenues for local input into national programming, or local interactive participation in the feed.

While "Bravo!" — to cite one example — has successfully signed up meritorious second echelon arts groups like the Milwaukee Symphony, the projected content does not seem much different from what we can see on public TV now. In part, that is because the target audience for all these services remains the elitist — or as the marketers prefer to characterize it — "upscale" share.

Established forms of culture for established audiences, in other words — hardly an environment conducive to the sort of pluralism and diversity that is both readily available in other quarters and badly needed everywhere. The end result of these ventures is unlikely to be anything other than vintage Old Television, characterized by inflated managerial overheads, limited aesthetic scope, and decidedly commercial motivations that all fly in the face of cable's low-cost, narrowcasting, local potential.

In the year that Steve Lawrence, Jonathan Meath and the rest of our research team has been studying the potential for a Public Arts Network in New York State, we've found a

number of puzzle pieces with which to construct an alternative scenario to BBF.

The PAN concept centers instead on cable access channels, and on the re-organization of their use for more effective communications efforts by non-profit cultural organizations and other public or public-service agencies. The idea is to use the network for outreach and "showcasing" rather than thinking of it as a direct source of new operating revenues.

Participating local access channels and live-injection studios would be linked to a statewide microwave network augmented by occasional use of satellites, in this scenario, with PAN created as one "mini-net" user time-sharing the link with other independently-programmed health, government, educational and social programming services.

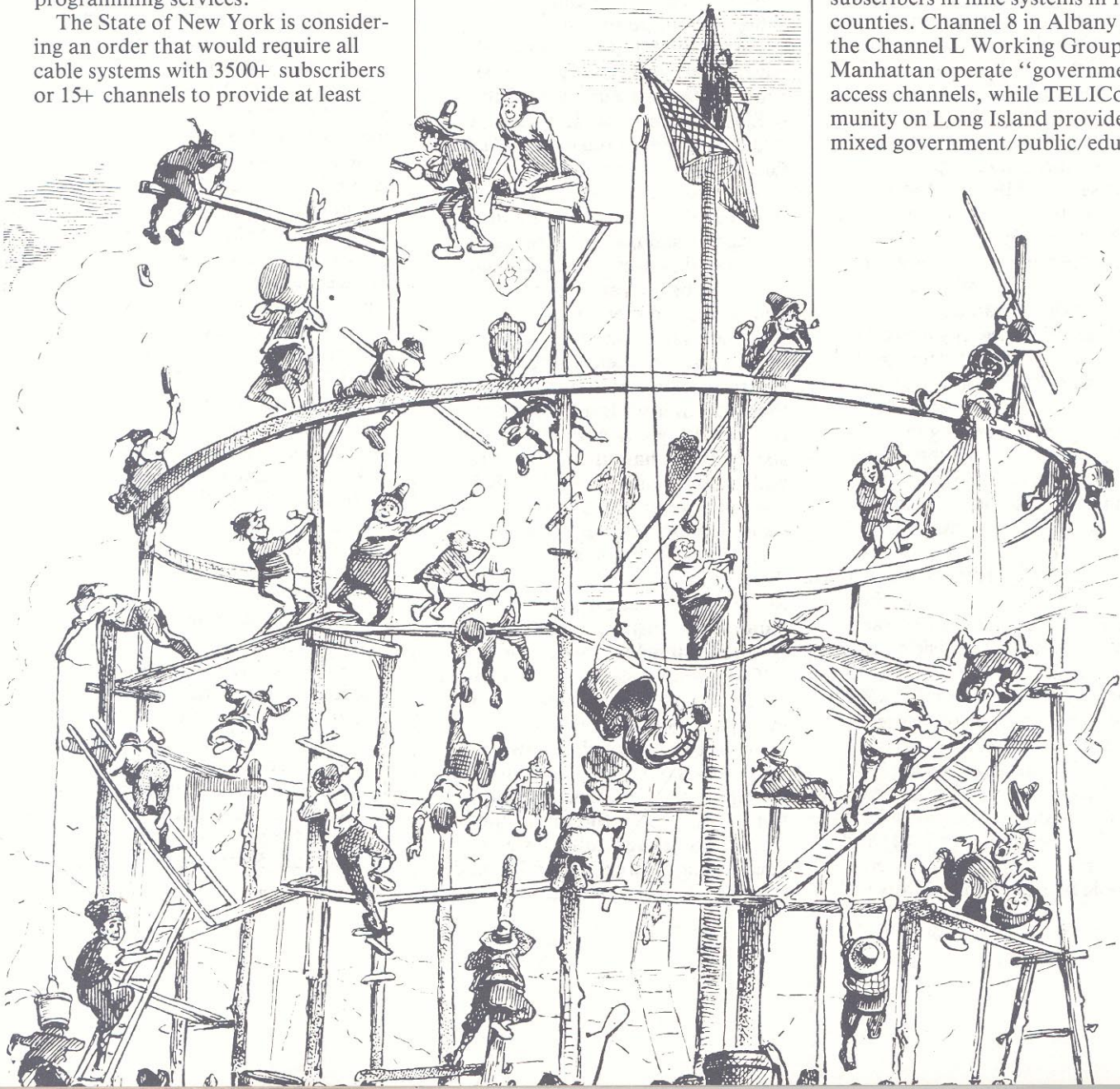
The State of New York is considering an order that would require all cable systems with 3500+ subscribers or 15+ channels to provide at least

one access channel, and has also authorized its Commission on Cable Television to order system interconnection in the public interest.

Such propitious opportunities do not exist in any other state, nor are there cultural television production opportunities and resources in any other state equal to those of New York's. The New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) spends more money annually on television than NEA does, for example, and in fact, NYSCA funds more television than all the other state arts councils in the country combined. A dense infrastructure of nonprofit "media centers" has been established over the last decade, and they have both recorded the performances of traditional arts/artists and devised many of the new frontiers of "video art."

Combined with the output of cable-affiliated access centers and educational institutions, New York boasts a video cultural repository unequalled in its scope, its depth, and also — alas — its invisibility. Other than closed-circuit showings in museums and other locations, or cable showings in the locality where the material originates, most of this work has never been seen by substantial audiences — despite NYSCA's further aid in establishing the Independent Cinema Artists and Producers (ICAP) corporation as a sales distribution arm to pay-cable and the forces of BBF.

To start up PAN, mutual memoranda of understanding have been executed among the state's three largest multi-system access organizations, which together reach over 400,000 subscribers in nine systems in five counties. Channel 8 in Albany and the Channel L Working Group in Manhattan operate "government" access channels, while TELICommunity on Long Island provides mixed government/public/educa-



tional access services. A dozen other potential affiliates in other New York communities would give the network a subscriber base in excess of one million.

Over 100 hours of available product has been identified in the libraries of these groups, and in the collection of the New York State Department of Education — all of it cleared for cable access use. That's enough programming on the shelf to start up a bicycled feed of two hours per week — including materials from the Brooklyn Museum, concerts, documentaries, interview shows, and instructional series.

This two-hour weekly "window" can be fronted and backed with arts programs created by cultural organizations in the local affiliate's home territory, including the possibility of local phone-in "follow-up" programs to discuss the content of a network presentation, or to interview some principal from a tape in the network feed. With a duplex microwave interconnect in place, sites all over the state could originate live programs and arrange their own statewide phone-in activities.

A two-hour weekly feed on, say, Sunday evenings could be easily expanded to three or four hours, supplemented by the addition of a second, third and fourth night for a maximum volume of 800 hours annually — eight times the start-up capacity. Daytime hours for teleconferencing, children's programming, and specials directed at senior citizen, homebound or student audiences could extend this capacity further still.

And if yet more hours should eventually be needed, state cable regulations propose to require that a "saturated" first access channel must be supplemented by the creation of a second one — thereby opening up long-term prospects for at least one statewide noncommercial channel in New York State substantially devoted to cultural activities.

How to pay for all of this? And to manage it?

We propose National Telecommunications and Information Administration funds for the microwave

link, with the 30% local share provided by a cut of the state's cable franchise fees. Network staff and administrative expenses could be covered by start-up grants from NYSCA and foundations, with long-term operational expenses financed from dedicated franchise fees, plus revenues from a monthly program guide and network telethons. If 50,000 of the state's cable subscribers could be persuaded to spend \$10 per year on such a subscription — sort of a tabloid version of *The Dial* with monthly network schedules and related background/promotional pieces — one half million dollars annually could be generated.

Unlike the centralized, upscale network models, PAN is not intended to function as a purchaser or financier of programming — only as its scheduler and promoter, once again expanding on the proven lessons and methodologies of "access." On a quarterly basis, the state's participating cultural organizations would be gathered to post their program offerings, discuss how to arrange the quarter's programming around common themes or subject matters, and compare notes on their individual and joint-venture progress in raising funds to cover production expenses.

If PAN were to pay for or otherwise sponsor such programming, then it would have a stake in its control — but under this proposed arrangement, the individual participating organizations would have both the freedom and the responsibility to exercise their own aesthetic judgments. Those groups which offer genuine quality and innovation will naturally tend to prosper, while those that are second rate will tend eventually to lose their ability to garner audience and finance — without ever requiring that the small PAN administrative staff (maybe 10 people at most) invent a "quality control" mechanism.

The result: "sponsored" programming in an access mode.

The bottom line, as they like to say in serious-sounding circles, is that PAN is not and cannot feasibly be a source of direct funding to arts organizations. But it can offer something even more important: the visibility necessary 1) to bring in more ticket-purchasing customers at the gate, and 2) to get more favorable treatment from government/foundation/corporate funders, both for ongoing operations and for the creation of more TV.

There is an as-yet unpredictable potential for using PAN's statewide interconnect for telethons, both for participating organizations and for ongoing network expenses — drawing on a statewide audience far larger than any single PBS station could ever hope to command. A small endowment harnessed to such a machine might be able to cover all operational expenses and eventually provide the prize monies for the festivals and competitions. In the long term, we believe these opportunities offer more value, diversity and stability to arts organizations than any of the bogus BBF enticements.

In the long term, it is also possible that PAN — operating as a quasi-state agency, perhaps with a contract with ICAP — would be able to repackage a "Best of New York" series for satellite distribution over ACSN or any other cooperative distributor — an additional source of revenues for arts organizations to use for programming.

The national implications of all this will emerge in due time, but from the ground up, particularly as local access organizations and state arts councils all over the country begin to create their own cultural mini-nets.

A national arts access network for these efforts is probably inevitable, given the current drift of things — and New York State's PAN will play its part in auguring that day.

William F. Rushton is co-author of the PAN feasibility study, which can be ordered from the Center for Arts Information in New York City. He is also staff director of the Telecommunications Advisory Committee for the Tri-State Regional Planning Commission of Connecticut, New Jersey and New York.

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A fascinating book on how to excite and involve your community in effective utilization of the community access channels. The book defines the concept of the community animator which has been successfully used in Canada.

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This book provides a valuable list of individuals and organizations who are actively supporting or using community access channels. Names and addresses are provided as well as descriptions of the facilities of some community access centers.

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3700 Far Hills Ave., Kettering, Ohio 45429

Federation Trunkline

by Susan Bednarczyk

INAUGURATION DAY is long gone, but the question on everybody's mind is "What's going to happen with the Communications Act Rewrites?" Hope JAY APRIL will have an answer for all of us down at the Convention in Atlanta . . . CINDY KUPER is pulling it all together for NFLCP down in the Big Peach with the help of our fine Atlanta members (and there are a lot of them, too!).

ATLANTA'S REALLY ON THE MAP since the non-stop NFLCP activity began this past fall . . . CITY OF ATLANTA hired the Fed to help them do a municipal access ascertainment . . . JABARI SIMAMA and others pulled together "Minorities and Cable TV — The Last Frontier," a conference that even had them coming in from the Coasts.

. . . And NFLCP's return to HBO with six hours of live coverage of the National League of Cities convention in November . . . with telephone call-ins, no less! Exec. Prod. FRANK GREIF was assisted by NFLCP volunteers CHUCK SHERWOOD, GEORGELLA MUIRHEAD, DIANA PECK, JAY APRIL, and DON SMITH. Who else helped? ACCESS ATLANTA's CINDY KUPER and NORBERT BAIN and STEVE CHEATHAM (The Atlanta Public Library) and JOHN HAYNES (Cable Atlanta) and MARTY LAFERTY (Cox) and PAUL ALDEN (TCI) and lots and lots of access volunteers. Folks in about 1500 places were able to see the shows via HBO during the three days.

. . . Word has it that Atlanta is so hot that the NFLCP Southeast crew is going to stir up Miami next.

MID-ATLANTIC DOES WHAT??? . . . NFLCP'ers in the NE who've been waiting a while for their next regional meeting think that they're imagining things — seems like every time one turns around their Mid-Atlantic neighbors are having

another get-together. Earlier on everyone met in York (Hi, NAT DE BACA!) then came another meeting hosted by BERKS COMMUNITY TV in Reading, and then they got 250 people to another meeting in Baltimore in January.

ANN ARBOR'S RISING AGAIN . . . At least that's the message MARTHA SCHMIDT gave everyone at the last Central States meeting. Seems like access had a pretty poor image there in the mid-70's and Martha and her crew, with a new infusion of dollars, are doing their bit to change it. Outreach is paying off, as is playing tapes from other access channels in the area. (Martha's favorite: farm wives from Lansing who do a program on farm life for city folks!) With city council and school board meetings, planning commission, series from the women's crisis center, some variety shows, and tapes from local schools, Ann Arbor access is running 10 hours/wk. original programming.

. . . MINDY SNYDER of EAST LANSING PUBLIC SCHOOLS CH. 24 also says a change-over is due there. A totally student-run channel is planned in the near future . . . GREG VAWTER of MIAMI VALLEY CABLE TV COUNCIL also says a two-way interactive in their city schools is planned this year. Greg says it will be like Reading's but without the split screen.

. . . And what about bringing back a little more patriotism on TV? Covering local events and speech contests might be what FRED WOODRESS of the national office of the American Legion has in mind in his plans for AL use of cable nationally

. . . Want a better idea for social service programming that seems too dull for its own good? JAN WAG-


NER, of Bloomington, Ind.'s Human Resources Department, has an idea: Instead of approaching one agency at a time and getting the rap from each, come up with a specific person's problem (complex, as they most surely often are) and do a program on finding all the answers. For instance, how's this for a problem/title/show — "Can a Divorced Woman with Three Children Afford to Go Back to College in Bloomington?"

MEMBERS AND MORE MEMBERS . . . Newest overseas members are BRUCE LLOYD of Guam Cable TV and DR. DAVID RUHE of Haifa, Israel . . . Cities just joining us: ST. LOUIS, VILLAGE OF FAIRPORT (NY), CITY OF SYRACUSE (NY), CITY OF EVANSTON, (Ill.), and CITY OF ZANESVILLE (Ohio). New libraries and schools — RUTGERS UNIVERSITY, PORT WASHINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY (N.Y.), ARLINGTON COUNTY DEPT. OF LIBRARIES (Va.), ESSEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE (Baltimore), and LORAIN COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE (Ohio).

New corporate/cable system members — TELE-COMMUNICATIONS, INC., DICKINSON PACIFIC CABLESYSTEMS (Fountain Valley, Cal.), and ARLINGTON CABLESYSTEMS (Mass.).

DO YOU REMEMBER . . . What ever happened to AMC intern RODGER PROIS, who used to work in Ft. Lee, N.J. and moved to Minnesota? SALLIE FISCHER met him recently at a cable hearing in the Minneapolis area . . . STEVE VEDRO recently recalled four-and-a-half years ago in Cambridge when NFLCP was only a philosophy statement on paper that Steven had to keep revising . . . DAVID BLOCH's advice on how NFLCP'ers could best help the Central States Region in 1981 — "Buy a car now."

Uplink/Downlink



Who's to Say When Video Is An Illegal Weapon?

by George C. Stoney

In *VTR St. Jacques*, that early (c. 1968) film exploring community use of video, made by Canada's National Film Board, members of a citizens' committee approach the inquiring camera to report that they have just been thrown out of a hospital waiting room after some administrator had demanded — and received — their tape.

"He said it was private," the women protest. "But it is we who pay for the hospital."

This was a prescient sequence. For more and more community media practitioners are finding themselves excluded from access to the material that concerns them. The people saying "no" are ones who call themselves "public servants" yet deny to the public they serve the right to protest the quality of service. Usually their defense is that they are "protecting the confidentiality" of their clients, or patients, or students, or prisoners.

If this meant the people in authority were only trying to make sure the individuals involved are willing to give prior consent one would have no quarrel with their stand. In practice, presenting proof of prior consent seldom makes any difference. Here are some recent instances involving community media people I work with:

- An honor graduate, now a senior at NYU, worked for two months on a project involving teachers and students in her old school. Everyone she wished to record with gave con-

sent. Still the principal refused her access to the school, *his* school. For one thing, he said he would have "chosen a more representative group to be filming."

- An occupational therapist, whose thoughtful and considerate approach to tapemaking has been demonstrated, recently became friend and confident of a quadriplegic who is permanently bedbound in the hospital where she works. The man has gone through a positive spiritual experience and wants to tell others about it. The administrator not only refused the therapist the right to make the tape but threatened her with dismissal if she defied his order.

- A daughter of mine works in a print shop run with and for retarded people. She is very proud of what she does. She and her colleagues asked me to make a tape about their work to show friends who can't visit their shop. Her supervisor was all for the taping, but it took me weeks to "clear" the idea with the administration. Permission was granted only upon my assurances the tape would never "go public."

A week later this same agency bundled my daughter and her colleagues into a bus, drove them to Albany from Long Island and had them demonstrating with banners on the steps of the Capitol for press photographers, all without asking

permission of the participants or their parents. Oh yes, we did sign a blanket photo release when our children were admitted (some years ago in my case). But knowing that admission was probably contingent on our signing this paper, how free were we to choose? I'm glad my daughter went to Albany, but I wish she and I had been given a choice.

There are usually two standards that govern these matters; one for administrators and the established media whose favor they court, and one for the patients and community media people who, on occasion, may be raising questions the agency people would prefer not to answer.

A few years ago Geraldo Rivera made quite a name for himself storming into mental hospitals, camera rolling, to reveal horrible conditions in the back wards. The conditions he uncovered and publicized did stimulate changes. His methods also gave the otherwise uninformed general public the idea that all state mental institutions are bad and ought to be done away with, thereby discouraging or ending for lack of funds a great deal of good work that was also being done in these same institutions.

Yet Rivera's methods were justified in part by administrators who, for so long, had regarded the institutions, and the problems as well as the accomplishments they house, as *their* "private property."

More commonly one finds a more sophisticated approach at work. The institutions have public relations departments. Members of the established media gain access by making

trades with their old press room colleagues who usually run these P.R. Departments. Administrators are persuaded that the exposure will be in their best interest. The staff seldom has a chance to protest. And what about the patients, or pupils or clients? They may be asked to sign a release form. But when it is a teacher or nurse or prison guard or other person in authority handing out the papers, how free are the signers to choose?

At present several students at NYU are trying to make a tape about the administration of food stamps. The project grew out of a request by a social agency that a tape be made about their Food Stamp Outreach program, one designed to help people having trouble with the bureaucracy.

The first problem was to find recipients of stamps who were willing to risk their eligibility by going on camera. Next, the students uncovered discrimination, rudeness and even physical abuse being meted out to applicants at the certification center. When they attempted to tape scenes there they were thrown out of what was described by the guard as "private Government property."

Next the tape makers went to supermarkets where stamps are redeemed and, once again, found they were on "private property." But the most discouraging thing was to discover, finally, that the social agency was not interested in fighting for the people whom they were supposed to serve. All they wanted was some evidence of their program to help them get an extension of their grant.

Recently, as a film producer, I was forced to pay \$4,600 to Carnegie Hall Corporation for the "right" to record on their premises (including the street under their marquee out front). Prior notice was posted to warn ticket buyers that filming was to take place.

A week later a network crew, with less than an hour's notice, moved into the same space, paying no fee and giving no notice to the public, and recorded for the "ten minute news break" most New York theaters' public relations representatives grant established media. The artists, the public and even the stage hands



Photo by Guntis Kupers

union members weren't consulted. It is assumed that "P.R." justifies all.

Judges in a number of states have decided that cameras should be permitted in court rooms. Did anyone ask the accused?

It seems to me that, as more community media is done by ordinary

citizens rather than professional journalists, we need to develop a code of ethics — of rights and duties — to guide us. It is time that the rights of people in front of the cameras be respected as much as the rights of those who control the space. Freedom of speech is freedom *to* speak, where and when you choose.

George C. Stoney is a professor at New York University and a founder of the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers.

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Richter, Jerry

Washington Group Shares Ideas, Forms NFLCP Core. Jerry Richter. 3:23 May '80.

Role of Video

Video in the Anti-Nuclear Movement: Bringing the News Back Home. Tobe Carey. 3:10 Oct '80.

Video in the Anti-Nuclear Movement: A New Role for Video and Videomakers. Parry Teasdale. 3:11 Oct '80.

Los Angeles Neighborhood Struggle Documents Activities for Feedback, Education and Outreach. Marsha Goodman. 3:12 Oct '80.

Rushton, William

Satellites Can Offer Locals Enriched Programming Schedules. William F. Rushton. 3:17 Ja '80.

Schools and Cable

Westchester Schools Form Consortium to Explore Cable Uses. Dr. Joel Persky. 3:9 May '80.

East Lansing's Six Access Channels: A Model of Community Involvement (Overview). 3:10-11 May '80.

Pennridge School Finds Cable Effective Community Link. 3:14 May '80.

Spokane Educational Consortium Puts Five Local Channels Into Gear. 3:15 May '80.

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Overcoming Passive Program Format Is Emphasis of Vermont Group. Tom Borrup. 3:10-11 Ja '80.

Satellite Technology

Satellites Can Offer Locals Enriched Programming Schedules. William F. Rushton. 3:17 Ja '80.

Seltzer, Kathy

Minneapolis Women's Groups Find Video a Valuable Tool. Mary Dorland, Fran Belvin, Denise Mayotte, Kathy Seltzer. 3:29 Oct '80.

Smith, Don R.

Bloomington's Popular 'Kids Alive': A New Kind of Children's Television. Don R. Smith and Rebecca McKelvey. 3:6 Ja '80.

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Westchester Schools Form Consortium to Explore Cable Uses. Dr. Joel Persky. 3:9 May '80.

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Minneapolis Citizen Groups Challenge Franchise. Lise Steinzor. 3:36 Oct '80.

Stoney, George

Trust Is Not Enough: History Shows Sharp Policy Shifts for Cable Industry. George C. Stoney. 3:21 Oct '80.

Teaching Video

The "Barre Ethnic Festival" Provides Training Ground for Community Television Students. Ann McIntosh. 3:12-13 Ja '80.

Teasdale, Parry

Video in the Anti-Nuclear Movement: A New Role for Video and Videomakers. Parry Teasdale. 3:11 Oct '80.

Teicher, James S.

Canadian's Community Television Performance Attractive to U.S. Markets. James S. Teicher. 3:32-33 Oct '80.

University Community Video

Federation Trunkline. Susan Bednarczyk. 3:4 Ja '80.

Independent Producers Reach for Alternative Distribution Outlets. Margie Nicholson. 3:14-15 Ja '80.

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Independent Producers Reach for Alternative Distribution Outlets. Margie Nicholson. 3:14-15 Ja '80.

VanDalsen, Randy

East Lansing Gears Up For NFLCP Convention. Randy VanDalsen. 3:18 Ja '80.

Convention Hosts Ready: Miami Valley Expands Base. Randy VanDalsen. 3:22 May '80.

Van Deerlin Lionel (Rep. D-CA)

Latest Van Deerlin Bill Contains No Cable Provisions. 3:7 May '80.

Video Festivals

NFLCP Hometown Festival and Tour: 1980 Announced. 3:8 May '80.

Sixth Ithaca Video Festival Starts Tour. 3:8 May '80.

Hometown Festival Videotapes Set for National Tour. 3:14 Oct '80.

Weiss, Helen

Public Telecommunications Entities Take Steps to Involve Women. Helen Weiss. 3:19 May '80.

Wex, Michael J.

Access' New Wave: Community TV in the 1980s (Uplink/Downlink). Michael J. Wex. 3:21 May '80.

White House Conference on Library & Information Services

White House Library Conference Lacking Telecommunications Resolutions. Lynne Bradley. 3:8 May '80.

Wolin, Rita M.

Community Video Center's Popular PACE Project: San Diego Seniors Use TV to Educate Each Other and the Community. Rita M. Wolin. 3:4-5 May '80.

Women's Programming

Public Telecommunications Entities Take Steps to Involve Women. Helen Weiss. 3:19 May '80.

Producing a Video Product Becomes a Dynamic Process for Boston Women's Shelter. Cindy Marshall. 3:8-9 Oct '80.

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Publications

Studies in Visual Communication is a multidisciplinary journal drawing on the many areas of scholarship that focus upon aspects of visual communication. The editors welcome theoretical and empirical contribution devoted to significant problems and issues in the study of visual communication. *Studies in Visual Communication* is published three times a year by the Annenberg School Press, an activity of the Annenberg School of Communications, 3620 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104.

The Touch of Art, 3/4" cassette, plus a guide on how to develop an artists-in-the-schools project is available for free loan to any school, community, or cable group from: Rosemary Lehman, 5513 Thunderbird Lane, Monona, WI 53716.

Community Video in California produced by Marin Community Video (MCV) is available for distribution: 61 Tamal Vista, Corte Madera, CA 94925 (415) 924-7370. Cost of rental is \$30.00, purchase is \$125.00 (3/4"). Other formats available upon request.

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(WIFP) in Washington, D.C. It includes women's media organizations, news services, film and video producers, distributors, radio groups, radio and TV programs, periodicals, publishers, and bookstores across the nation. To order a copy, send \$8 to: WIFP, 3306 Ross Place NW, Washington, D.C. 20008 (202) 966-7783.

Access II: The Independent Producers Handbook of Satellite Communications, Joseph D. Bakan and David L. Chandler, published by the National Endowment for the Arts. Includes basic principles of satellite communications, dealing with networks, creation of new networks and owning your own dish. Appendix and bibliography provide additional useful information. To obtain a copy at \$3.00, contact: The Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, 625 Broadway, New York, NY 10012 (212) 473-3400.

A Short Course in Cable, Jennifer Stearns, published by Office of Communication, United Church of Christ. Covers history of cable, how it works, basics of franchising, local and access programming, regulations, and a look at the future of cable. Available from: Office of Communications, United Church of Christ, 105 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10010.



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